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THE VENERABLE

# DON BOSCO

FOUNDER OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

AND

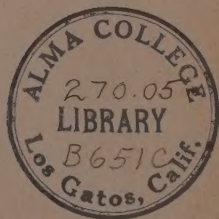
THE DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

BY

THE MARQUIS CRISPOLTI

TRANSLATED BY

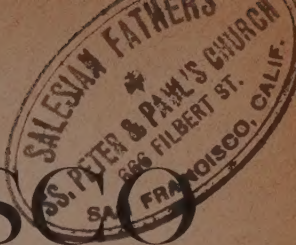
WALTER G. AUSTEN, S.C.



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TO THE REVERED MEMORY  
OF  
DON MICHAEL RUA  
(THE VEN. D. BOSCO'S FIRST SUCCESSOR)

TO WHOM

THIS BOOK - SUGGESTED AND AWAITED BY HIM - IS DEDICATED

IN THE HOPE

THAT BY HIS INTERCESSION I MAY LEARN  
TO IMITATE THE VIRTUES PRESENTED TO ME  
BY THE VEN. DON BOSCO  
WHILE WEAVING HIS LIFE'S STORY

THE AUTHOR.



## THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE Standard Life of the Ven. Don Bosco is being written by the appointed Biographer, Don Lemoyne, S. C., whose acquaintance with the Servant of God was both long and intimate. The Life upon which he is engaged has already reached its ninth volume, and is not yet completed; but when we consider the wide sphere of action in which Don Bosco laboured, this abundance of matter is very easily explained.

The Author of the present work, the Marquis Crispolti, has had access to the above sources of information, and to much unpublished matter, and the Very Rev. Don Rua, who requested him to write the Life, well knew that he possessed all the qualities which the author of such a work should bring to his task. He is a writer of distinction on subjects connected with journalism, biography and art; he enjoyed the intimate friendship of the very foremost among the Salesian Co-operators; the Life has therefore been widely read, and will remain as both authoritative, and sufficiently comprehensive. It is hoped that the many good qualities of his style have not all been obscured in the process of translation.

Readers make such varied demands upon the Lives of the Servants of God — demands which vary, one may suppose, according to their point of view,

and to what they are accustomed to look for in their general reading matter. We venture to proffer the opinion that the Life of the Ven. Don Bosco will be equal to these expectations. Are you interested in the natural — or the supernatural? None was more homely, more unaffected or more natural in his dealings with all — yet, as the Reader will see, few, if any, of the Servants of God were more constantly in touch with the supernatural. Do you fancy visions or apparitions? There is a whole chapter entitled: "Visions and Previsions." Or are you of an historical bent? Don Bosco was brought into touch with many of the interesting historical figures of that troubled period of Italian History, and was the confidant, as well as the counsellor, of Popes and Kings. It is a Life with interest and lessons for all.

It only remains to add that the English edition has been undertaken at the request of our present Superior General, the Very Rev. Don Albera, who has constantly sought to realise the exhortation — contained in the letter accompanying the Decree for the Introduction of the Cause — that the knowledge of Don Bosco's Life should be spread far and wide.

THE TRANSLATOR.

LONDON,

Feast of St. Francis of Sales, Jan. 29th. 1918.

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IN OBEDIENCE TO THE DECREES OF POPE  
URBAN VIII. AND OF OTHER SUPREME PON-  
TIFFS, THE AUTHOR BEGS TO STATE THAT,  
IN REGARD TO WHATEVER IS HEREIN  
NARRATED, NO HIGHER AUTHOR-  
ITY IS CLAIMED, THAN THAT,  
WHICH IS DUE TO ALL AU-  
THENTIC HUMAN  
TESTIMONY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SUBJECT OF THIS MEMOIR.

ON December 8th 1841, a young priest met a poor lad in the sacristy of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi at Turin, and offered to be his instructor in religious knowledge. This simple incident was the commencement of the vast exterior development of Don Bosco's work.

On what lines, and how wonderfully it grew, may be judged by the statistics published twenty years after his death on January 1st, 1888. When the close of his life was near at hand, he said: "It would have been possible to do more, but my sons will do it;" and by those words he seemed to adopt in some manner as his own the undertakings which his sons were to accomplish in his name. And with good reason, for rarely in the course of history have the followers or disciples of a man preserved so faithfully, or loved so strongly, the spirit of their leader; or have shown such willing and joyful obedience to the directions he left while still in their midst. And hence it is that all the institutes that bear Don Bosco's name to-day ought to be ascribed to him, not only because he may have founded them and brought them to a certain stage in their development, but because he is their inspiration and willed their later growth.

In 1908 (1) the official statistics of his work were:

In Italy his priests conduct thirty-two Schools for young students and artisans, professional schools of arts and trades; twenty-nine boarding schools; nineteen public day schools; all these having a

(1) Considerable additions should be made for the subsequent nine years.

total of 10,923 pupils; they also direct sixty-one festive oratories with 13,530 pupils. Outside Italy, in the civilised countries of Europe, America, Asia, and Africa there are seventy-two Institutes for industrial or agricultural training, with 5,170 pupils; one hundred and six colleges with 5,888 pupils, ninety-five day schools with 12,819, one hundred and fifteen festive oratories with 24,888.

In the Missions for the native tribes of the Pampas of Patagonia, of Tierra del Fuego, of Mendez and Gualaquiza, of Ecuador of Matto Grosso in Brazil, about a thousand priests, with the assistance of the Nuns of Our Lady Help of Christians, direct parish churches, chapels, hospitals, homes, schools, observatories, and have brought to the light of the faith and to civilisation some 80,000 of the natives. Moreover in the various places where there are large numbers of immigrants, particularly from Italy, Houses have been opened especially for their assistance, or this work has been directed from the Houses already existing in the localities. By these means they have aided very large numbers, including 150,000 in the Argentine, 60,000 in Uruguay, 100,000 in Brazil, 70,000 in the United States, and 35,000 in Europe. This will give a general idea of the extent of Don Bosco's beneficent work.

In regard to his zeal for the salvation of souls and the spiritual welfare of the people, it will suffice to say that he and his followers have been responsible for the erection of about three hundred new churches and chapels; in regard to general enlightenment it should be added that, not content with writing many volumes on civil and ecclesiastical history, on piety, and on all sorts of educational topics, he established printing-presses, which are constantly issuing works on liturgy, theology, scholastic subjects of all kinds and reading matter for the young and for the people at large. And all this he did without any fixed income or any permanent source of supply for the vast sums which had to be expended; in all his necessities he looked to Divine Providence.

However, figures only give one side of the case: it is necessary to deduce from the external and material view what is contained therein of a spiritual value. These buildings and their inhabitants and the sums expended imply food and labour, knowledge, dignity, health, virtue—all given out to youthful generations, so that they will have no reason to cry out in tones of complaint, as some did to Don Bosco in the early days of his apostolate: "If we had only known you before, this state of things would not have come upon us."

They imply, moreover, vast beneficial work on behalf of the savage tribes, rendering them both Christian and amenable to law, and also on behalf of those thousands who leave their native shores for foreign lands, and run the risk of losing their true civilisation, namely, their faith. They imply, again, a humble, unpretentious, yet munificent generosity in thousands of Co-operators, following the footsteps of those very earliest assistants of Don Bosco, who even provided him with his clerical garb, and already showed him in one of his chief rôles, that of dignifying and ennobling wealth, by turning it to its highest purpose.

These outward things, finally, signify thousands of his priests and nuns who have left all things to follow him; to devote to the welfare of others the testimony of their religious habit, of their vows, and of their oft unappreciated work; and perhaps to sacrifice their life, for among their many departments of charitable endeavour is the care of the lepers in the lazarettos of Agua de Dios and Contratacion in Colombia; and whoever volunteers to labour there knows what risk he or she runs, for one may die by slow wasting-away, and become an object of disgust to oneself and to others, including those for whom this greatest of all sacrifices is made.

Would it not then be opportune to become more intimately acquainted with the life of him who could accomplish such extraor-

dinary things? It may be thought that sufficient notice has already been given to one who was almost a contemporary of ours, and whose life and actions were passed in our very midst; but that is an illusion. Generally speaking, our contemporaries that become famous, only become known when their fame begins to spread abroad; their early years, which are in great measure accountable for their subsequent fame, are as it were under a shadow; moreover those that are witnesses of the daily development of these great works become accustomed to their progress, and though they are convinced that they are a sort of prodigy, yet they are not struck by their marvellous nature, and thus the stimulus to take particular notice of men and things is lacking; so it frequently happens that the little known persons are those who are daily in our midst.

Don Bosco had the good fortune to be somewhat of an exception to this; or perhaps it should be said that those had the good fortune who made use of their opportunities; he made no secret of the incidents of his life, and there were many who could bear witness concerning him. Moreover quite a system of continuous history grew up around him, so that he is one of the very few among famous men, of whom very little is not known; and one of that small number whose lives can be presented to a large reading public without much effort of laborious investigation.

It was Pius IX. who commanded him to give up his own secret on the occasion of the second of the many audiences with him. It was March 21st 1858. The Pope asked for minute details of the work of the Oratory in Turin, how he came to begin it, the difficulties in the way and how they had been overcome. Don Bosco gave his explanation. At a certain point, Pius IX. looked fixedly at the narrator and asked if he had at any time been guided by secret directions. Don Bosco seemed reluctant to answer this, but the Pope insisted. Then the priest opened his whole mind unreservedly and spoke of his very earliest previsions, some of

which were already fulfilled, and which had come to him when he was about nine years of age.

The Holy Father listened with great attention and emotion, making no secret of the fact that he was particularly struck by what had been related. Then he said: "Return to Turin, put in writing all that you have told me about your dreams and other circumstances, exactly, in every detail; preserve it as a precious inheritance for your Congregation, leave it as an encouragement and instruction for your sons."

Don Bosco was unwilling to write about his own doings and experiences. So long as the recommendation of the Pope seemed to him merely a counsel he hesitated about fulfilling it, but he had to yield when the counsel became a command. In fact in 1870 he wrote *The Memoirs of the Oratory from 1845 to 1855*. They were written solely for his followers, and were never published as a whole. But, preserved as they were in the Archives of his Society, they could be consulted in their entirety, and were in part reproduced by Father Lemoyne in his invaluable *Biographical Memoirs of Don Bosco*, which have been printed, but only privately circulated. The seventh volume carried the narrative to 1886, and when completed this publication will form the standard work on the subject.

At the outset of his narrative Don Bosco remarks upon his unwillingness to reveal such things, and the effort it cost him to obey; for it was evident that, being placed under an obligation to speak of himself, his sincerity would make known much that would cause him to be highly esteemed and to become the object of praise, yet he desired to be so open and frank as to give us to understand that he could not help rejoicing to some extent over it. "If you come across anything narrated with a touch of pleasure or even of complacency, you must forgive me. It is a rather taking a homely satisfaction in speaking of his affairs to his

sons, who are pleased at the little incidents in the life of one who has loved them so much, and who, whether in simple occurrences or in things of great moment, has always sought their spiritual and temporal good."

Besides this source of information, some of the young clerics who formed his earliest band of disciples, kept records of what they saw and heard. But in order that this matter might be properly sifted, and that the work might be methodically conducted, they joined with some others in 1861, and founded a sort of society by an act which is worthy of being recorded. It is as follows: "The remarkable and ennobling gifts which are revealed in Don Bosco, the extraordinary occurrences which happen in connection with him and at which we marvel every day, his singular method of leading the young to piety and virtue, and the great designs which he proposes to realise in the future have led us to conclude that there is something supernatural about him, and to foresee days of special significance both for him and for the Oratory. All these considerations impose a debt of gratitude upon us, and an obligation of preventing anything of importance concerning Don Bosco from falling into oblivion; so that in days to come his name and memory may be as a shining light to illumine the future generations in promoting the welfare of the young. Such is the object of the commission hereby established." The signatories were: Father Alasonatti, Rua, Savio, Turchi; Cavaliere Oreglia di Santo Stefano; the clerics Cagliero, Francesia, Durando, Cerruti, Anfossi, Provera, Bonetti, Ghivarello and Ruffino. These names are given, since each one should be numbered among the contributors to the complete memoir. From 1877 onwards there has been the further supply of matter from the *Salesian Bulletin*, which gave information every month concerning the work, and much of which was written by Don Bosco himself.

Mention should also be made of such authorities as Don Ber-

Villardoro, who from his early boyhood knew Don Bosco, and who, when he had become a Salesian and a priest, was his confidential secretary and companion from 1866 to 1886. Again Don Bosco, as the Director, often spoke at the meetings of the Sodality of St. Aloysius, of the Immaculate Conception and of the Blessed Sacrament; the secretaries of these sodalities preserved his words most faithfully, and in this way there began a collection of maxims, examples, counsels and exhortations to be handed down to succeeding members. Much of this matter ran the risk of being lost by the dispersion of the members of the sodalities, but so much has been preserved and since discovered, that the problem is not to find matter, but to know what to select. The difficulty is somewhat diminished by the fact that wherever the selection is made, the matter never fails to be most useful and interesting.

In short, just as in music it would seem that the combinations of the notes has become exhausted, but suddenly there appears a genius to draw from them unexpected harmonies and melodies; and amid the varied manifestations of charity, some are just thinking that there could not possibly be room for new departures, when there alight upon the scene such men as Don Bosco, who soon show that something yet remains to be done, and that they can walk in their appointed way with full stride. One who perceives this, and gains a correct view of it, is greatly comforted, for he learns that there is no age, nor any set of public circumstances which can render the action of sanctity impossible or superfluous, but that as soon as it appears it finds its proper sphere.

There is a further source of comfort in the fact that, although periods of time bring with them special characteristics, sanctity needs no new abodes, nor any radical reforms in the religion from which it draws its sustenance. When Don Bosco is seen in our own days, in the midst of the same spiritual unrest which tempts so many either to deny everything, or to wish to revolutionise

everything; when we see him obtain his influence over the soul from that virtue which is not restricted to any one time, but found in every period of Christian life, — then it becomes clear that, although the sphere in which it is exercised may vary, it has no need nor reason to change itself, so unfaltering is its fecundity and its power of adaptation.

And thus there is unrolled before the mind the wonderful sign of a life which was perfectly coherent from birth to the tomb; not composed of brilliant episodes as are those of the heroes of history, but which is all heroic without any interruption in the chain; without any self-seeking which distracts the purpose from its goal, to divert it upon complacency towards one's own acts; without the disturbances of passion which tend to dissipate energy into many channels. We have the wonderful experience of witnessing a life, whose unity is not simply that virtue influenced it as a whole, but displaying a harmony of virtues, diverse and even opposed in character; which are not only kept united by the will dominating them, as it were, from behind, by careful and laborious effort; but these virtues are cultivated in an harmonious rivalry by a fervent charity, which is at the same time their source and their restraining influence; so that the character of the man remains distinctive, natural and, above all, attractive, while he remains both their subject and their master.

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## CHAPTER II.

### CHILDHOOD.

WHEN John Bosco was born at Becchi, a hamlet near Murialdo (in the north of Italy) on August 16th, 1815, peace had only just been secured after more than twenty years of public disturbances. Napoleon was on his way to St. Helena.

It was a much longed-for peace, for the revolution had penetrated even to the lowly household in which John was born. The great upheaval had not brought to their neighbourhood the germs of new ideas and new perils, but had rather the effect of a storm of hail; and as yet they had not only preserved what was sane and solid in the traditional country life, but the public calamities had made them even more fixed and determined.

Margaret Occhiena, the boy's mother, was born at Capriglio in 1788. She had lived through troublous times, and had as a child driven out the horses of some mercenary soldiers from her father's barn, where they had been led by the troopers to find fodder. She had been able to go to Turin to see Pope Pius VII. on his way to crown the new emperor; but the peace had been of short duration, for the Pope went back through Piedmont a few years afterwards, a prisoner himself, and a period of taxation and conscription continued. At the age of twenty-four, Margaret was married to Francis Bosco, who was four years older, and who was a widower with one son. His small farm was at Becchi, and it was there Margaret found her future home. Francis was of the same character as the family in which he had sought his second wife, given to industry, of sound judgment, and of a strong, old-fashioned Christianity; one of those who had learnt from the

unfortunate results of the changes that it was only necessary to adhere to former ways and ideals, in order to lead contented, vigorous and worthy lives.

In fact, a glance at the circumstances of this family — which on April 8th, 1813, was gladdened by the birth of the first child, Joseph and two years later by that of John — forces us to the conclusion, that for certain social classes and for certain districts there was no need of a revolution in ideas and methods; for the man and woman had attained a degree of moral excellence, equal to the difficult circumstances of their life, and such as would have sufficed for much higher positions.

But the happiness of their married life was short-lived. On May 11th, 1817, Francis Bosco died. He recommended to his young wife the care of his aged mother and of his sons, especially of the youngest, John, who was but a child of two years. Was the remembrance that Don Bosco had of this sad event a real direct record of the circumstances, or was it a retrospective construction built up by him upon accounts heard subsequently? The fact is that he believed he could recall the sad scene, and in after years when asking for prayers for his father, he would say: "I cannot remember what he was like, for I was too young at that time. I do not know how it affected me, I only remember that my mother said: 'Now you have no father,' and that is my earliest recollection. As all the relations went out of the room where my father lay I wanted to remain behind, but my mother took me away. I still persisted, saying: 'If father cannot come, neither shall I.' But my mother replied: 'Come away, you have no father now.' That made me burst into tears; but somehow I never forgot her words: 'You have no father now.'" And whenever he referred to this occurrence, he was deeply moved.

The years of Margaret's widowhood were the test of her char-

acter. The care of the farm devolved entirely upon her, and she was equal to the task. Not only the women's part, but also the men's was quite within her powers, and her vigorous conduct kept them up to a high standard of industry. Yet with all this she never lost for a moment her womanly dignity and gentleness, and this expressed itself in a thousand ways. She never forgot that her husband had recommended to her care his aged mother, and her fulfilment of this task was quite exemplary. She deferred to her in all things and managed all their little differences of opinion with tact and submission, and whenever her duties gave her a little free time, it was always spent at the side of her mother-in-law.

Her source of trouble was her step-son, Anthony. Although in later years he shewed sterling qualities, was on good terms with his brothers and acted justly to his step-mother, as a boy he was stubborn and jealous. He thought Margaret favoured her own sons unduly, and she endeavoured in all sorts of ways, both openly and secretly, to prove how groundless were his suspicions.

Once when she was saying prayers with the boys, she stopped them in the middle of the "Our Father," and told Anthony to omit the words "forgive us our trespasses;" on his demanding the reason, she replied that he bore hard and angry feelings towards his brothers, and that while he did so, he could not expect to be forgiven.

This was done on several occasions, until at last it made such an impression on the boy, that he declared he was sorry for his conduct and asked his mother's pardon. From her own deep religious piety she drew her devotion to her duties, her firm endurance, her extreme thoughtfulness for others, and so she used as the chief instrument in the education of her sons. Is it not most probable that Don Bosco drew from this training the conviction that all educative forces and influences come from example and from the practice of piety?

The presence of God was her most powerful aid in correcting her boys, and in getting them to act uprightly in all circumstances. Whether they went out to play, or were grieved over some boy's quarrel, or were tempted to excuse themselves by hiding the truth, her admonition that nothing was hidden in God's sight was ever an effective restraint and remedy. She had an innate repugnance for idleness, and never allowed her boys to waste their time; and this too we see that Don Bosco afterwards carried out in regard to those under him. As a mere child, he helped in the fields, and soon began to be very useful. It is probable that the power thus early obtained by the country child, as distinct from his town-bred companion, whose time is passed chiefly in the streets and in amusing himself, gave Don Bosco a childhood already marked by readiness, eagerness, and initiative, as contrasted with other children, whose early lives, though equally destined for the paths of sanctity, are backward, timid, and perhaps spoilt.

Thus it was that when he was only four years old, he could exercise an influence over children much older than himself. He mixed with other boys from the neighbouring town, and this once caused his mother to remark that he ought to be more careful in the choice of his companions, since some that he went with were evidently not very desirable as playmates. John answered that this was exactly why he went with them, and that while he was there, they behaved better and restrained any unbecoming talk.

The child of one, who, when herself a child, had driven off the soldier's horses from her father's barn, was not likely to be lacking in courage; and this he displayed not only in the ordinary circumstances of life, but against the more serious obstacles of prejudice and superstition which are generally believed to be legitimate reasons for dread. When he was a few years older, it happened that most unaccountable noises had been heard at interv-

in a barn near by, and it was freely stated that only the evil spirit could be capable of such infernal sounds. But John would hear of no such thing, and he offered to lead the way to the loft. When they were about to go up, there was a great noise as of something heavy rolling about, and something seemed to be dragged from one corner of the room to the other.

Most of the party turned pale and advised a retreat, and that the search should be postponed till daylight. But John ridiculed their fears and led the way forward, the others following, armed with sticks. When the boy entered the loft, it appeared at first to be empty, and all was silence, but those that stood in the doorway suddenly began to shriek, for, over in a corner of the loft, a large sieve began to move about, apparently by itself. At the noise, it became still again, but soon after began to move forwards and stopped just in front of John, who had gone towards it. This movement so frightened the one who carried the lantern that he dropped it, and it went out, but another being brought, John picked up the sieve, not without many cries of warning from those behind. But these were soon changed into roars of laughter, for under the sieve was a big hen. The bird had gone close to the sieve to peck at the grain left between the wires, but this had caused it to fall upon her, and she had not been able to release herself. Her vain struggles and movements, especially at night, had been the cause of the weird noises.

John was growing up a fine boy, with a pleasing, frank countenance; his dark eyes seemed to give expression to his whole face, for they varied as the light fell variously upon them; he had plenty of thick, curly hair, of a darkish colour, like his eyebrows, and the enterprising character of his whole bearing was assisted by his remarkable physical strength, developed by labour and by his fearlessness in running, jumping and climbing. Does this not

suggest that his subsequent desire to see his boys active and vigorous arose from his own endowment and special dispositions?

He is probably the sole example of a boy, who, although he had been trained by his mother to let religion have a constant influence on his life, and who had, through the gifts of his vocation, a way of winning a hold on the hearts of all, yet who began his apostolate among his companions by means of bodily exercises and games of skill. Led by a desire to gain the power of amusing the young lads about the neighbourhood, and of thus keeping them out of evil, he asked his mother to let him accompany her to the markets and fairs in the neighbouring villages, where jugglers and entertainers of all sorts gave their performances. There he watched the different operations with such attention that he soon discovered their secrets, and after some practice could imitate them perfectly. He then gave displays to the people in a field, beneath a big pear-tree, but before he did so he got them all to join in the Rosary, and also to listen to his version of the sermon given by the priest in the parish Church that morning; for these entertainments were usually given on Sundays or holidays when there was time for loitering about. If any objected to these religious exercises and began to move away, he quietly pointed out that if they went they would not come back to see his performance. This threat was usually effective, and, as a matter of fact, his little discourses were found so interesting that even grown-up folk would not miss hearing them, and passed many complimentary remarks concerning them. After his discourse, his entertainment began, and therein he proved himself a complete master of the general tricks of the jugglers of those days, and more than a master almost of all feats of bodily skill and gymnastics. A short prayer completed the evening's entertainment, and all departed to their homes.

The boy who thus turned to the spiritual advantage of others what were usually regarded as foolish pranks, came back from

is severe exertions to the little deeds of delicate charity which he had learnt from his mother. There was a boy who passed a good deal of his day with John, for he was engaged in similar work in the fields, and they took their breakfasts with them in their pockets. The companion's bread was of a very inferior quality and not very palatable, whilst John's was white bread, the result of Margaret's excellent household management.

One morning John surprised his companion with the question : "Would you do me the kindness to change bread with me?" The other boy wished to know the reason, for he was quite aware of the superior quality of John's bread. "Oh," said John, "your bread must be better than mine and I prefer it." The boy believed this, in his simplicity, and willingly made the change, and this was done every morning when they met in the fields during the next two years.

John was always fond of being with other boys, specially when he could be of some service to them, but not when they wished to draw him away with them to their mischievous pranks. There were four or five other boys in the fields with him, supposed to be minding their cows, but more often indulging in boyish fun. John never took part in it, but had a book to read, or sometimes said the Rosary. The boys resented this apparent aloofness, and regarded it as a condemnation of their conduct ; so on one occasion they resolved to make him join in. Requests, however, proved unavailing, and arguments arose. John urged that far from condemning them, he was actually minding their cows while they played. But they were determined, and declared they would make him join in ; upon his persistent refusal, they set about him with their fists. John was quite capable of defending himself, for he was stronger than any of them, but he made scarcely any resistance, and when they had vented their wrath, they went off mocking and threatening. John sat down under a tree and continued

to mind their cows, and when they came back to enquire whether he had grown wiser after his beating, and would consent to join in, he answered : " You can knock me about as much as you like, but I shall never join in, for I want to study, so as to become a priest. "

This reply made the boys think a little, and his patience proved to them that he was superior to threats or to persuasion. Soon afterwards they agreed among themselves to look after all the cows, and said to John : " You need not bother any more about us or about the cows, for we shall look after them. You may get on with your reading. "

Thus his early boyhood passed away, during which he made his First Confession and First Communion with great devotion and with an intimate knowledge of the importance of the act. A memorable day, which seemed to be the guiding influence of his early apostolate, to foretell his vocation, and to be a summary of all his aspirations, was that signalised by a dream he had when he was nine years of age. In his own memoirs he speaks of it thus :

" I seemed to be near home in a yard of large size, in which a multitude of boys were gathered together. They were playing and laughing as boys do, and some were using bad language. On catching the sound of these evil words, I hurried at once into their midst, urging them by voice and manner to cease. At that moment a man of august presence appeared. He was in the prime of life, finely clad, and his face seemed to shine so brilliantly that I could not look upon it. He called me by name, and told me to become the leader of the crowd of boys, and said : ' You will not win over these friends of yours by blows, but by gentleness and charity ; you must set to work at once to instruct them in the vileness of sin and the excellence of virtue. ' In dread, and utterly confused, I

answered that I was but a poor and ignorant boy. But at that moment the others ceased their noisy games and evil talk, and gathered round the majestic person who was speaking. Without knowing quite what I was saying, I asked him who he was. To which he replied: 'I am the Son of her whom your mother has taught to salute three times a day.'

"And then I saw by his side a lady of majestic bearing, with a shining mantle about her. She looked at me, and signing for me to approach, took me by the hand and said: 'Look!' I turned round and perceived that the boys had all disappeared, and in their place was a herd of animals of various sorts. Then said the lady: 'This is your field of labour. You must become humble, wild and strong, and what you now see happen to these animals you must do for my children.'

"I looked about again, and perceived that instead of the wild animals, they had become so many lambs. Then I began to cry, and begged the lady to speak openly to me for I could not imagine what it all meant. She placed her hand on my head and said: 'At the proper time you will understand its full meaning.'

"When I related this dream next morning it was the cause of much laughter. Anthony exclaimed sarcastically: 'Perhaps you are to be the captain of the bandits.' Joseph said: 'You are evidently intended for a shepherd.' Our old grandmother remarked in a definitive way: 'No notice should be taken of dreams.' Margaret looked at her boy for a time and then said: 'Why should it not mean that you are to become a priest?'"

## CHAPTER III.

### EARLY STUDIES.

IN THE year 1826, when John was eleven years of age, a mission was preached in the neighbourhood of Becchi in order to prepare the people for the Jubilee granted by Pope Leo XII. The preachers were men of great reputation, and many went to hear them from the districts round about. Don Calosso, the priest from Murialdo, was there, and as the groups made their way home in the evening, he noticed a boy walking along with a serious air. He knew who he was, so he asked him what he had understood of the two sermons of the day. "I understood them completely," replied John. The priest was not inclined to believe this, and said he would be much surprised if he could tell him a few words of them.

"Well, which would you like to hear," asked the boy, "the first or the second sermon?"

"Whichever you like."

"The first sermon was about the necessity of turning to the mighty God in good time, and the danger of delaying conversion; and, if you like, I will repeat the whole of it now."

Then without more ado, he repeated the introduction, and touched three points, namely, that in putting off conversion one runs the danger of losing either the opportunity, the grace, or the disposition necessary for it. The priest listened to him for more than half an hour, and so did many of the people who were going along the same way.

When he had finished, the priest inquired what studies he had

e, and found that he had done hardly any, because Anthony, step-brother, was of opinion that studying was waste of time that he should work in the fields. "But," he added, "if I ld go to school, I should make up for lost time."

"And why do you wish to study?"

"In order to become a priest."

"And why do you wish to become a priest?"

"In order to instruct the many youths who get into wrong-doing evil ways because no one is interested in them."

This conversation deeply interested Don Calosso. When they e to the parting of the roads, he said to John: "Don't worry at all these difficulties. Tell your mother to come and see next Sunday evening, and we shall see what can be done."

Thus was the question of John's studies brought into promi-e. But there was no immediate solution of the difficulties. ony, now a young man, and not to be disregarded in the erns of the family, insisted that during the summer season hought should be given to the question of going to school, but they should postpone the matter till the autumn. When that on came, John went every day to Murialdo for lessons from Calosso, and was a very apt pupil. Among his writings we a reference to this time: "I then began to learn what the itual life really was, for I had previously acted more like a hine, which works without knowing the reason." And it must emembered that what he learnt from Don Calosso was imparted any others for their spiritual good, for the boy never ceased apostolate he had begun.

When spring came, his brother's opposition again made itself Lessons must be restricted to the morning, and the afternoon : be spent in the fields. But sometimes there was a strange oination for John might be seen working with a hoe in one hand his grammar book in the other.

However, Anthony's ill-will increased, rather than subsided. It was more or less understood that when winter came round John should be free to devote his whole time to his studies, but more objections were again raised. The mother therefore resolved to send her boy away from home to a family where he might be left in peace. John therefore started out on a new life. As a son he had previously been to some extent his own master; he was henceforth to be subject to strangers.

It was now February, 1828. John took with him only his clothes and a few religious books given him by Don Calosso. The hostility of his step-brother made it impossible for Margaret to make proper provision for her boy, and this same ill-feeling made her hasten his departure. Thus she reckoned on the kindness of others without notifying them beforehand, and when John reached the first of the farms where she had told him to enquire, he found there was no work for a boy of his years, and the same was the case at other places. At last he reached the Moglia's farm, where his mother had assured him that he would be received, since he was known to them. But even there John had to use all his youthful arts of persuasion to make the master accept his services for it was winter, and in that season, the man said, he always kept the lads away, instead of receiving them. But his wife was moved to pity by the boy's forlorn state, and at her request he was allowed to remain and help in the work of the farm. Although John afterwards referred to this time as a most interesting period, since it was his first experience of being out in the world among strangers, yet he gives no details of his stay there. He only remarks that he was constantly occupied, from early morning till noon.

From others, however, we learn that he continued his former manner of life, and by his games and entertainments he made many friends among the young people of the neighbourhood.

uld sit on a heap of straw and teach them catechism, as they in a large semi-circle around him, and in the winter he pursued his usual method of interspersing the Rosary and Litany with stories or instructions and the singing of hymns. It may be mentioned that only boys formed the congregation. In the summer he conducted these meetings under a mulberry tree, and the parents very willingly entrusted their boys to John for the afternoon and evening, whilst they went to the parish church, or attended to their affairs. But again, John took care that the gathering was composed exclusively of boys. He would not even deign to mind a baby-girl, and when the mistress of the house expostulated, he replied: "That is not what I am destined to do."

One day the master of the house came in suddenly and found John, who had come in just before him, kneeling at the top of the stairs saying the Angelus, and called out: "Just see: we who are the masters must wear ourselves out from morning till night, while he is quietly up there praying in peace. In that fashion it is easy to gain Heaven." When John had finished his prayer, he came down, and turning to the old man, said: "You know very well that I never spare myself when work is to be done, but it is certain that I have gained more by prayer than you by your work. If you pray, four ears of corn will grow out of two seeds, but if you do not, four seeds will only yield you two ears of corn. What would it cost you to rest a moment at your work and say a prayer?" The man was quite taken by surprise, and exclaimed: "Is it come to this, that I should have to take lessons from a boy?" But a few days afterwards he made the admission that he now found it impossible to sit down to his midday meal without first saying the Angelus.

But what amount of serious study could John do with his few books, and how could he have profited by the permission to study, which Signor Moglia would willingly have given him? In the

autumn of that year, 1828, he met a priest, a relation of Moglia's, who was pleased to give him an hour's lesson a day during the short time he stayed with his relations. On Sundays and holidays, John went to Moncucco, and gave instructions to the boys in one of the rooms of the school, the use of which, the parish priest, Don Cottino, had secured for him; and there the boy taught and explained and repeated his stories and illustrations, just as he had done in the hay-loft, or under the mulberry-tree; but the instruction that was necessary for himself he only obtained at brief intervals from the above-mentioned Don Cottino during 1828. However, at the end of that year, a change came.

It happened that his uncle, Michael Occhiena, called at the farm and saw his nephew; he found him quite contented with his lot, and with the small sums which were sent to his mother as payment for his work. Only one thing troubled him — his insatiable thirst for study.

His uncle took him back with him to Becchi, promising that some arrangement should be made; and thus it was that John returned to his own home after two years of practising a life of obedience, and becoming expert in all departments of agricultural labour. Would he find his step-brother as antagonistic after two years of separation? It was arranged that John should go every day to Don Calosso as he had done before. Peace was maintained for a short time and then Anthony began his former opposition. Don Calosso then took John into his own house, a departure which delighted the boy, especially as his mother decided, after so many years of strife, to make a settlement of the property, so that Anthony took a separate establishment of his own, and peace reigned. But even now this happy state of things was not destined to last beyond a few months.

One morning in November 1830, Don Calosso sent John to his home on an errand, but he had scarcely arrived, when a messe

came saying that he must return at once, for Don Calosso had been taken suddenly ill, and was asking for him. John returned immediately, but the priest had an apoplectic stroke and was now speechless. He could only make a few signs, and in this manner gave John a key, making him understand that he was to give it to no one, and that the contents of the box which it opened were entirely for him. John put the key in his pocket, and busied himself in attending in every manner to the dying priest. On November 21st, two days after, Don Calosso passed away.

Those who had assisted at the bedside now told John that the key which had been given him was the key of the priest's desk, and that all the money therein contained belonged to him. Others, however, said that as it had not been left by will, he could make no claim to it. John was in some anxiety about this, but after a little thought, he said: "I shouldn't care to go to hell for the sake of a little money; I won't take any of it." But the former witnesses insisted on their point, alleging that the manner in which he had been sent for by the dying man, the words he had used while he was yet able to speak, the key given to him in such an expressive manner, clearly indicated his desires and that the money belonged to John. But these arguments could not persuade him. In the meantime, the next of kin arrived, accompanied by some other relations, and enquiries were made for the key of the desk. John offered it at once, saying:

"This is the key of the desk where his money is kept. Your uncle gave it to me, and desired me to give it to no one. Some of the witnesses say that I am entitled to take what is in the desk, but I would prefer to remain poor; I do not wish to be the cause of contentions, and after all, your uncle did not expressly say that the money was to be mine." The nephew took the key and found in the desk about two hundred and forty pounds in notes. Having counted it, he turned to John and said:

"I wish to respect the last desires of my uncle; this money is yours, you have full liberty to take whatever you like. "

John hesitated for a little while: he knew clearly enough what were the last wishes of the priest, and now he had the full permission of the heir. Notwithstanding this, he determined not to touch anything, and replied: "No. I shall not take any of the money. Heaven is more valuable to me than all the wealth and money of the world."

"Very well," replied the heir, "if that is your determination I thank you for your unselfishness and generosity."

So John took nothing. In his memoirs he makes but a passing mention of all this. He merely says: "The relations of Don Calosso came, and I gave them the key and everything."

Thus the boy, who in later years was glad to receive any gift on behalf of his work, and was ready even to beg for it, gave away at that time what would have been to him a mine of wealth; and this he did for the simple reason that, as it was destined for himself, it seemed to lose all attraction and worth in his sight. He then left that hospitable roof, having lost all in losing his benefactor and teacher. His life and studies must find a fresh opening.

## CHAPTER IV.

### IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

JOHN now embarked on a new life; its routine was novel to him; he had fresh needs and dangers, for at the age of fifteen he was about to enter the public schools. During the first term of the scholastic year 1830-1831 he lived at Becchi — for his step-mother was no longer there — and went to school at Castelnuovo. This sounds simple enough, but it entailed great sacrifices, for he had to walk there and back twice daily, since his mother could not afford to let him buy a midday meal at Castelnuovo. He thus walked ten miles every day, and his first term was the winter one.

But this fatigue was spared him by a certain Signor Giovanni Roberto, who kept a tailor's establishment in Castelnuovo. This man knew John slightly and admired his ability and character, so he proposed that the boy should live with him. This was agreed to. He next offered to teach John his trade and to apprentice him definitely to it. John was willing to learn and to help the man in his trade, but he would not agree to settle down to it as a livelihood. Whatever free time he had from his classes he wanted to devote to study, for he felt that his future lay in that direction and not in any material labour. But other considerations asserted themselves; there was his love for industry, his remarkable skill in all manual arts, his desire to repay in full measure the kindness of his host, and these made him devote himself seriously to learn the tailor's art. In a very short time he had mastered the elementary stages and could soon cut out and make almost any garment. When many years had passed and the work-shops had been established in the Oratory, he referred to this time in the

tailor's shop, saying with a smile : " I thought I was already competent master-tailor. "

When his needs were pressing he looked round to discover new sources of supply. In this connection should be mentioned his carrying off the purse of twenty-five francs placed at the top of the pole as a prize for the successful climber. John arrived unnoticed upon the scene and watched the failures of all the competitors. He then presented himself, and was laughed at, but when the spectators beheld him gradually nearing the top, and taking the manoeuvre in easy stages, a silence fell upon the crowd ; and then amid cheers he seized the prize, slipped down and disappeared. He wanted the money to purchase books and clothes ; and this was by no means the only instance when his physical skill became a source of profit.

It was also at this time that John developed his musical ability. Signor Roberto was the director of the choir in the parish church, and having noticed that his young assistant had a good voice, he commenced to give him lessons in singing. John soon learned to sing Plain Chant, and after a short time took a prominent part in the choir. He also learned to play the violin and the harmonium, and he became so skilful in the latter that he sometimes acted as organist in the church. Not content with all these occupations in the hours free from school, he even found time to spend in the shop of Signor Savio, an iron-worker, and learned much of the mechanic's art.

It would seem that he who was destined to found so many sorts of schools, was thus enabled to train himself in the work which he would direct on behalf of others. In this however he had but to select a suitable trade for each, whereas he himself had a close acquaintance with several.

At the end of 1831, a pious widow, a friend of Margaret Bosco, offered a home for John at her house in Chieri, where he would be able to attend more advanced schools, and where she hoped he

would be able to exercise an influence over her son, who was troublesome, and some other lads who were boarders in her house. This arrangement was agreed upon, and, when not engaged in school work, John gave every assistance possible in the house, and found time to learn the carpenter's trade; at this he became skillful enough to turn it to his own profit, or to the service of his benefactors, as he always terms those who kept him during these years at school.

Later on when this good woman moved from Chieri, John went to live with a certain Signor Pianta who had opened a small restaurant, and there the young assistant became quite an adept in the making of delicacies and mixing liquors etc., so much so that the owner wished him to become a partner in the business, and made him very generous proposals, if he would devote himself to the work. John refused, as he had done in other cases, declaring that he must pursue his studies. But he continued to assist his host and thus procured what money he stood in need of. He never lost his old skill in conjuring, and his physical strength seemed to grow more remarkable every day. He was a complete refutation of the prejudiced notion, that those who are devoted to piety are not well developed physically, or are at some disadvantage in regard to bodily perfection. He could crack the hard nuts of the peach or apricot between the thumb and finger of either hand. Without exercising great effort he could break the bars of iron which are generally used for making balconies and such work.

One day during his course at Chieri when he went into a classroom, four companions jumped on his back, one on the top of the other. John let them all get on; then he caught hold of the arms of the top one and pulled him down so as to squeeze the others firmly between; in this position he took them out into the playground. The victims cried out to be released, while the whole school of boys and teachers looked on and enjoyed it. John kept

quite serious and returned to the class-room with the boys on his back and there released them. No one thought of playing jokes with him after that, but at the same time he took himself severely to task for showing the slight resentment that might underlie this defence of himself. In fact he sometimes allowed others to excel so as not to be troubled by the thought that he had sought praise for his strength.

This particular gift remained with him till the end of his life, even after his many labours and sufferings. The doctor, who attended him in 1884 during a severe illness, desired to test his strength, and before giving him the instrument which would measure it he said :

"Don Bosco, will you feel my pulse here and press it as hard as you can?"

"Mind," replied Don Bosco, "you evidently do not know my strength."

"Never mind, do as I ask you, you need not fear to hurt me."

Don Bosco agreed, but after a brief resistance the doctor gave a cry. He had not bargained for so much. Then the dynamometer was produced and Don Bosco told the doctor to register his own strength first. The doctor pressed with all his might and the instrument registered forty-five degrees.

Then Don Bosco said : "Now let the priest who is assisting me try." The priest did so and registered forty-three degrees.

"Now it is your turn," said the doctor. Don Bosco took the instrument and pressed; the register went up to its maximum, sixty degrees.

The young student must have led a very laborious life. He was attending classes during the day, and in the evenings found time to learn the trades above referred to, to learn several musical instruments, to assist the owners of the place, in return for his board and lodging, and in addition to this he cut short the hours

of repose in order to go to Mass and to make a meditation. He was moreover learning in the school of experience. He says in his memoirs :

“ During my time in the first four classes I had to discover the best means of dealing with my companions. I had divided them up into three categories according to a scheme of my own; the good, the indifferent and the bad. My plan was to avoid the last mentioned as soon as their character was discovered; with the indifferent I was on ordinary terms, treating them courteously and only having dealings with them when necessary; with the good I determined to make friendships, but my familiar friends should only be the best among them. As I was at first a complete stranger in the town I resolved not to form friendships with anyone. Several boys tried to get me to join in their escapades, but these I usually managed to avoid by saying that my mother had entrusted me to the care of my guardian, and that I could not go with them without permission. One even suggested that I should steal money from the house in which I stayed.

The restaurant in which I lived for a time was also a source of danger, for it was frequented by such a variety of persons; but the owners were good Catholics and I soon had some excellent companions.”

Sometimes when he was in charge of the billiard-room, where he always took in a book to read, he was much concerned by the language and ejaculations which were occasionally indecent and profane. The aggrieved manner in which he heard these words was often enough to make the speakers stop short and correct themselves, and sometimes he gently reproved them, for some of them mentioned the fact to the proprietor.

The generous disposition he manifested towards his companions, especially to those who lived in the same house with him, once brought upon him a rebuke from his teacher. John sometimes

assisted backward boys in their tasks. When the master discovered that the work they presented to him was not their own, he strictly forbade John to assist them again, as it encouraged laziness. This prohibition was a check upon John's generosity, and he would not consent to disobey the commands given him; but in order that his companions might not be disgraced by the poor quality of their work, he left his own written exercise in their study room, and went out without saying anything about it. The boys soon saw their opportunity and availed themselves of it only too well, for they were not skilful enough in deceit to alter anything. The master saw what had happened, and called John to reprove him. The boy however affirmed that he had not disobeyed his orders, adding that as his work was left in the room it was not improbable that it had been copied. The master who knew John well, smiled and said: "I am quite ready to overlook it this time, but be more careful for the future."

John then adopted a more fruitful and more lawful method, for he undertook the work of a tutor, and supplemented the class-teaching by further explanations in private, and this gained him many friends. They began to associate with him out of school hours particularly in the recreation times, and thus he gradually found around him a group of companions similar to that he had had at Murialdo and Castelnovo. They called themselves the *Merry Company*, or the *Association of Cheerfulness*, as each one undertook to promote to the best of his endeavours the happiness and cheerfulness of all; every source of melancholy or sadness was banned, but particularly whatever was unseemly in good Christians and young students. The rules excluded all who offended under the last heading and John was the President of the Association.

In his capacity as such, he once challenged a certain juggler who, in face of many protests on the part of John, persisted in

giving his displays during the hours of the Sunday services, thus distracting the people. The juggler was beaten in every department of his profession, and as forfeits in money had been previously decided upon, he lost all that he possessed. However, having beaten him, John restored all the winnings, on the condition that he would change the times of his performances, and pay for some refreshments for all the members of the Association.

Chieri was also the scene of John's first specifically apostolic act. Among the young men who had been attracted to him was a young Jew, whose many excellent gifts had made him a favourite companion; but one day, through some thoughtless escapade, he became mixed up in a quarrel, and went to his counsellor for advice. John pointed out that if he were a member of the true Church, he would take him to confession, but under the circumstances that remedy was impossible. The friend said he was quite prepared to go to confession, and on finding that instruction was necessary, he began to study the catechism and had all his difficulties explained by John, who taught him to pray for guidance and help. After a few months the young man was publicly received into the Catholic Church, and was always a faithful friend to the one to whom he owed his conversion.

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## CHAPTER V.

### HIS VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

ONE morning in 1831, while John was staying at Murialdo, the master of the farm noticed that he was in exceptionally high spirits, whereas he had previously shown less than his customary happy disposition. On being asked the reason of his joy, he replied :

" I have had splendid news ; I have had another dream in which I was told that I shall be able to continue my studies and become a priest, and shall be devoted to the education and care of boys for the rest of my life. "

" Oh ! that's merely a dream, " replied the other ; " dreams and facts are very different. "

But John was not in the least disturbed, or shaken in his confidence. On the following day in a conversation with the mistress of the establishment, he explained that he had seen in his dream a noble lady, who was leading a large flock of animals ; she approached John, and calling him by his name, said :

" I am going to confide the whole of this flock to your care. "

" But how shall I be able to take charge of such numbers, and where shall I find the pasture on which to feed them ? "

" Have no fear about that, " she replied, " I shall assist you. " And then she was gone.

In his memoirs this fact is summed up in the scanty words : " At the age of sixteen I had another dream. "

John had no further doubts that he would one day become a priest. But from about the year 1834 he entertained the idea that

would be better to enter a Religious Order. In fact among his writings is the following passage :

"The dream at Murialdo impressed me deeply; it came to me several times, becoming clearer and clearer, so that I was led to give it credence, and it pointed evidently to the ecclesiastical state, towards which I felt that I was drawn; but one is inclined to be wary in regard to dreams, and my manner of life and the lack of the necessary virtues inclined me to hesitate. If I had only had a sure guide at that time, to direct me in regard to my vocation, it would have been to me the greatest treasure; but I had no such assistance. I had an excellent confessor, but he would never undertake to direct me in regard to a vocation. I therefore had to direct myself, and having read some books on the choice of a state I decided to enter the Franciscan Order. I thought that if I entered the ecclesiastical state and took up parochial work, I should not be able to preserve my vocation. I said to myself: 'I shall never enter the ecclesiastical state, I shall leave the world and go into a monastery where I shall devote myself to study and meditation, and the subjection of my passions, especially pride, which had struck its roots deep into my heart.'"

He spoke of this resolution to Father Dassano at Castelnuovo, who thought it his duty to speak to John's mother about it. He pointed out that there was a great deal of work to be done in the diocese, and that if John wished to be a priest he should take up parochial work; he had received great gifts from God and was bound to be successful. Then he added :

"Try to dissuade him from it: you are not rich, and you are getting on in years: if your son goes into a monastery, how will he provide for you? I have come to advise you for your own good."

Margaret thanked the parish priest, but made no comment as to what her sentiments were. She went over to Chieri where John was at School and said to him :

"Our parish priest has been to see me, and has told me that you wish to enter religious life. Is that so?"

"Yes," replied John, "I thought you would have no objection to it."

"I only desire that you consider carefully what your vocation is, and then follow it whatever it may be. The parish priest wished me to dissuade you, on account of the assistance you might one day be able to render me. But in such things I am not to be considered; God must come first. Do not worry at all about me. I neither wish nor expect anything from you. I was born poor and have lived so; and I wish to die poor. If when you had become a secular priest, you had the misfortune to become rich, should not even come to see you. Now we both understand the position."

When Don Bosco had reached the advanced age of seventy years or more, he still had a vivid remembrance of his mother's commanding look on this occasion, and still heard her serious tone; when he spoke of it, he was always deeply moved.

His memoirs give us the sequel to this: "As Easter approached — it was on March 30th that year, 1834, — I sought admission into the Franciscan Order. I had told no one of my intentions; and while awaiting a reply I was much surprised by a companion saying to me: 'So you have decided to become a Franciscan?' I looked at him in astonishment, but he then explained that he had received a letter asking him to inform me that I should go with him to Turin for an examination, as he also desired to become a Franciscan monk. I went with him accordingly to the House of Our Lady of the Angels at Turin, was accepted by the Order, and arrangements were made for me to enter their Convent *della Pace* at Chieri. However, a few days before the date fixed, I had one of the strangest of dreams. I seemed to see a great number of those religious, with their habits all torn, and running about in

sort of contest among themselves. One of them approached and said: 'You are coming to find peace, but you will not find it. Look at the condition of things among your brethren. A different here and other work God has intended for you.' I was about to put a question to the Religious, but a noise awoke me and the one had vanished. I described this occurrence to my director, but he would discuss neither dreams nor monks."

John was now in a state of perplexity, but not altogether shaken from his purpose. In fact, assured that God would direct him, he went to his plans and went to Castelnuovo to ask his mother's blessing, before receiving the Franciscan habit. Margaret had no idea of opposing him, and parted with her son with all calmness.

But dissuasion came from other directions. New plans were put before him, and arrangements were proposed by which his studies could be completed. However, the one who finally contained him to alter his mind was a young priest from his native place, Don Cafasso, (now the Venerable Don Cafasso) who, although only about four years his senior, was held in the highest esteem by John, as indeed by every one. At that time he was appointed to assist in the direction of the well-known ecclesiastical College of St. Francis of Assisi in Turin.

John went to Turin to consult him, and was advised not to enter the Order, but to continue his studies at the Seminary, and prepare for the work God had in store for him. He obeyed. In August 1834 he completed his classical studies with the highest distinction, and in the following year studied rhetoric. It was that year that he formed a close friendship with the boy Luigi Tomollo, who encouraged him in a life of sanctity both by word and example. This young man died in 1839, and was the first of the saintly youths whose memory Don Bosco recorded in writing. He said of him:

"Our friendship was quite an intimate one, and it was from

him I first learned what a truly Christian life was. We had complete confidence in each other, and had in fact need of each other's assistance. He gave me spiritual help; I acted as a protector for him. His was of a retiring disposition, and he was occasionally the butt of the thoughtless, or the ill-disposed among our companions; but I, who was somehow naturally fearless and robust, was regarded therefore with some awe by all the youths, even though they were older and bigger. One event gave them good reason for this. A number of the young men were bullying Comollo and another companion, who was extremely good-natured. Seeing this ill-treatment I tried to intervene on their behalf. But argument proved useless. Then I cried out: "Shame upon you, I demand of anyone to insult them again!" A good number of the biggest and boldest assumed a threatening attitude against me, whilst poor Comollo was being knocked about by others. Then I lost all thought of myself, and as there was no means of protection at hand, my brute strength asserted itself. I caught up a boy by the shoulder and used him as a stick against our adversaries. Four of them fell headlong to the ground, the others fled in all directions and begged for pity."

It must be noted that in the defence of the innocent, his good resolutions to restrain his natural vigour were cast aside. The narrative continues:

"As soon as we could exchange a few words Comollo said: 'Your strength makes me afraid, but believe me, God did not give it to you to massacre your companions. We should pardon the evil and try to render good for evil.' He was in fact of the sweetest disposition and was never known to answer any insult except by forbearance and affability. I admired his wonderful charity, and placing everything in his hands, was guided entirely by him."

It was not only in humility that John found his companion much advanced. He was highly talented and among the best

students of the school, but as his character was not so complex and many-sided as John's, he had been able to control it more readily by the precautions, the restraints and the gentle attractiveness of piety. However, the perfection of the friend, although not of the high quality which John's had already attained, undeniably influenced him; it made him more guarded in all his actions, for he wished to obtain the same restraint which Comollo had already obtained over himself; he had no desire to excuse any defects by the plea of variation of temperament.

It is somewhat remarkable that even in after years, whenever John Bosco quoted some youthful example, whether from the boys educated by him or with him, who were distinguished for virtue, he seemed to have a predilection for the type represented by Comollo, in preference to that which he represented himself; the type in which piety dominated the whole character, absorbing, as it were, every other endowment, and expressing itself in a guarded gentleness of manner, which sometimes wore the outward semblance of timidity. Later on, when for a few months he acted as parish priest he almost invariably advised mothers to give the name of Aloysius to their baby boys. He seemed to be insensible to his own type, energetic, enterprising, vivacious; his humility may have caused him to be oblivious of it, or it may have been that he suspected that when one's character is thus of a manifold nature, the influence of piety over it is not visible enough to give any clear and decisive example to others.

On October 25th 1835 John Bosco was invested with the clerical habit. The ceremony was held at Castelnovo, the officiating minister being Don Cinzano, and although the function was usually more or less private and caused but little excitement, it was not so in John's case — for the people knew the extraordinary gifts of the young cleric, and that it was the opening of a remarkable future. Strangely enough, there was on this occasion a sort of

foreshadowing of the combined assistance of his co-operators after years; for the various articles that went to form the outfit a cleric were provided by various relations and acquaintances his native place. His theological studies began at the Semina on October 30th, 1835.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### A SEMINARIST AND A PRIEST.

JOHN'S resolutions on his entrance into the Seminary are worthy of record.

He first of all decided that all the public displays and entertainments he had given were no longer in keeping with the gravity of the state into which he had entered; and resolved to practise abstinence and strict temperance, and to allow only just that amount of sleep that was necessary for health. Religious subjects alone were to be the matter of his reading; the slightest occasion against gravity was to be shunned, every means of practising it was to be once adopted; meditation and spiritual reading were to be added to his practices of piety, and every day he resolved to speak of some edifying example to those with whom he happened to be brought into contact.

This last resolution shows that he would maintain his characteristic trait of an apostle, otherwise it might be thought that he was but pursuing the ordinary path of sanctity, and had no claim to special distinction; that he was submerging what was most obviously his own, what was already mature, and practically unique in his life. In fact he who, at twenty years of age, had exercised an influence from his boyhood, not only over his companions, but over adults; who in so many vicissitudes, had gained an infinitely wider experience than if he had lived in easier circumstances, or entirely devoted to study; who had learned nearly every trade; whose precocious apostolate had even included acrobatic performances, now, as though his varied apprenticeship had not taught him enough, is determined to learn from his superiors and com-

panions, and from rules which would be more often a restraint than an impulse to advancement.

The four years of his life as a Seminarist, and the early years of his priesthood, show him above all as practising virtue in perfect manner; but it is virtue which transcends rules and well-known models. His friendship with Luigi Comollo remained, for he too had come back to Chieri as a seminarist; but this friend died in 1839, and appeared after his death — as John and his companions remembered with an almost terrified awe — to tell him that his salvation was secure. It might appear to a superficial observer that this friendship had an excessive influence on John, that it tended to make of him another Comollo, and to make him less true to himself. Moreover, certain traces of a scrupulous suspicion about the salvation of his soul, so opposed to his nature, which was frank and open, even to a happy self-sufficiency, would give further grounds for the impression that the fulness of his natural disposition was gradually being attenuated.

Yet in all those years he continued to exercise the fruitful apostolate that had been so striking during his earlier studies. Many incidents are recorded of him at the Seminary, in which his ingenious charity was conspicuous; there was also his founding of an Academy for the discussion of philosophical and theological matters; the gentleness, patience and light-heartedness with which he supervised a number of young students from the Jesuit College who were passing their vacation at Montaldo, near Chieri; some very fruitful sermons preached for various parish priests of the neighbourhood, and careful economy of the minutest portions of time, passed in reading on a wide scale, particularly in ecclesiastical history.

Again, anyone who looks beneath the surface, knows that in the lives of the great Christian heroes there are certain moments when, wholly given up to devotion, to obedience and humility,

their natural gifts seem to lose something of their conspicuousness; but afterwards they bud forth reinvigorated, just as is the case with plants when the drooping leaves appear to be a destruction, but prove to be but a fecundation of the soil. A brief consideration will show that this was the case with Don Bosco, that this period of interior mortification made more disciplined and fruitful the gifts which we have noted in his early years, and which will continue to operate all through his life.

On March 29th 1840, *Laetare* Sunday, he received the tonsure and the four Minor Orders; on the Saturday of the autumn Ember week, September 18th, the Subdiaconate; in the following year, March 27th 1841 he received the Diaconate, and on June 5th, the Saturday after Pentecost, he was ordained priest by His Grace Archbishop Fransoni. For each of these steps he prepared with deep recollection, and by fervent and assiduous prayer.

His first Mass was said on Trinity Sunday, June 6th 1841. His memoirs tell us:

"I celebrated my first Mass in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, where Don Cafasso, my director and particular benefactor, was the head of the Conference.

"The people of my native place were most anxious for me to go home, as it was many years since a first Mass had been celebrated there; but I preferred to say it in Turin away from all distraction. It was said at the Altar of the Guardian Angel, on the Gospel side of the Church..... At the *memento*, in that ever-memorable Mass I took care to mention particularly all my masters in the Seminary, and my spiritual and temporal benefactors, and especially the lamented Don Calosso, to whom I always regarded myself as much indebted. It is a pious belief that the favours asked by a priest at his first Mass are invariably granted; I asked in a special manner for the gift of *efficacy in word*, in order to do good to souls."

On the Monday he said Mass in the Consolata : on Tuesday in the Church of St. Dominic at Chieri ; on Wednesday in the Cathedral there. Of the Mass on the following day he left the record in his memoirs :

" On Thursday, the feast of *Corpus Christi*, I satisfied the desire of the people of my native place. I went to Castelnovo where I sang the Mass and carried the Blessed Sacrament in the Procession. The Rector insisted on inviting a goodly number to the repast, and all were extremely pleased, for I was somehow much beloved by the people there, and all rejoiced in what concerned my welfare and advancement. That evening I spent at home. But, when I was near the place, and saw where I had had my first dream, at the age of nine, I could not restrain my emotion, and exclaimed : ' How wonderful are the designs of Divine Providence ! God has indeed raised up a lowly child, to place him among the chiefs of the people. '

When my mother had me to herself she spoke these memorable words : ' You are now a priest and you will offer the Holy Sacrifice ; you are therefore nearer now to Jesus Christ. But remember that to commence your priestly life means that you will begin to suffer. You may not perceive it at once, but after a time the truth of my words will be clear to you. I am sure that you will pray for me, whether I am alive or dead ; that is enough for me. Henceforward devote yourself entirely to the salvation of souls. '

Don Bosco spent a few months at Castelnovo, taking the place of the parish priest. His choice then lay between three spheres of work. The first was the office of tutor in the house of a Genoese nobleman. His friends regarded it as a very advantageous offer, since his entire salary would be at his disposal, for the welfare of his family. But Margaret, who dreaded for a priest the enticement of a comfortable life, exclaimed : " My son in the house

of the wealthy?..... What would the salary avail me or his brother, if it placed his spiritual welfare in jeopardy! ”

The second offer came from his own district of Murialdo, where he would have been appointed parish-priest. This was also advantageous from a material point of view, for the people were prepared to guarantee a double stipend, if only they could secure him as the guide and master for their boys. The third proposal was that he should be assistant-priest at Castelnuovo, where the people and clergy thought they had the first claim upon him. The choice was left entirely to Don Bosco; but in so important a matter he would not trust to his own judgment, and he went to Turin to consult his confessor and director, Don Cafasso, to learn from him what was the Will of God. Without any hesitation his confessor said: “ You ought now to go through a further course of moral theology and sacred eloquence; put all these proposals out of your mind for the present, and enter the House for the clergy at St. Francis of Assisi.” If Don Bosco was to take an advanced course of theology at all, the advantages of coming to St. Francis’ were obvious; he therefore accepted the offer and entered on November 3rd 1841.

He came directly under the influence of Don Guala, the founder and director of the Institute, and of Don Cafasso, who was the theological lecturer and spiritual director. Don Guala took care that his young priests learnt not only from books, but also from experience. For this purpose he sent them to visit the poor and sick, the Cottolengo Hospital and the prisons. Don Bosco needed no urging in the direction of charity towards the needy and unfortunate, but from that time he began to acquire first hand experience, and to form suitable resolutions for his own guidance.

That spirit of initiative which had been ripening for years now began to display itself. In the houses of the poor he saw how wretchedness contributes to the ruin of the children, and how

this misery tends to increase in its own surroundings; in the hospitals, the maladies of the young touched him most deeply; in the prisons he was struck by the large number of youthful offenders and by the ineffectualness of the prison routine to work any cure. Indeed it seemed to be but a method of training hardened criminals. In the town itself he saw other factors at work. The migration towards the large centres had just begun; the people who, in the country or provincial districts, had been in touch with the priests and the churches, now found themselves unknown and generally uncared-for. There was no proper accommodation for the new inhabitants and the children found their only recreation place in the streets.

Don Bosco's thoughts were for ever wandering to the unhappy condition of these children; his old tendencies and new experiences combined to produce the eager desire of gathering the crowds together in some suitable place, where they would be free from dangerous surroundings and bad companions, where they could be instructed in religious knowledge, and prepared for the Sacraments.

But that which might have been for a long time only an indefinite plan, became a reality by an unexpected incident. On December 8th of that same year 1841, Don Bosco was in the Sacristy of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, ready to vest for Mass, but waiting for someone to come to serve it. A poor boy came into the sacristy, looking round in a sort of bewilderment, as though he had never seen such things as sacred vestments. The sacristan, a rough and ready sort of character, went to him and told him not to be idling about, but to go and serve the priest's Mass.

The boy seemed dumbfounded by this command, but presently stammered out that he could not serve Mass. This angered the Sacristan, who took it for granted that any boy who entered the Sacristy could serve Mass, and he showed his irritation by beating

he boy severely and putting him into the street before the priest could prevent him. When he returned, Don Bosco spoke to him very severely, told him that the boy was one of his friends and bade him go and find him.

The Sacristan had little difficulty in doing this. He brought the boy back and Don Bosco told him to stay during his Mass, and that afterwards he had something to tell him that he would like to hear. When the Mass was over, he questioned the boy as to his home and work, and discovered that he was a country-lad with no parents, no education and no friends; that although he was only sixteen he could not remember when he had been to the Sacraments and had forgotten his prayers. Don Bosco proposed that he should give him some religious instruction there and then, and when the boy showed himself not only willing but eager to be taught, Don Bosco knelt down to say a prayer beforehand. He felt that a great enterprise was opening before him, and in fact at that moment he not only came into contact with another's soul, but realised completely the work of his own. The apostle began the regular fulfilment of his vocation among the young, and initiated what was destined to be his fundamental work — the Oratory.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE BEGINNING OF DON BOSCO'S ORATORIES.

ON the following Sunday, the boy met with in the preceding chapter, Garelli by name, was not the only pupil, for of his own accord he had brought some other poor boys with him. A few Sundays after, as Don Bosco crossed the church while the sermon was in progress, he saw some big boys sitting on the steps of a side altar and going to sleep. He spoke to them in a low tone and asked why they were going to sleep. One boy replied that they could not understand the sermon, and so it was no use listening. Don Bosco took them into the Sacristy and after some conversation invited them to come with the others to his Catechism lessons. One of these lads was Carlo Buzzetti, who afterwards became a building-contractor and conducted all the building operations which Don Bosco subsequently required. These and the other boys were recommended to bring as many as they could to the Catechism, so that the number went on increasing from week to week.

Don Bosco devoted not only his Sundays to this work, but in the spare time he could get from his Institute. He went about the streets and into the workshops finding out the boys at the different works, particularly those who came from long distances and were away from their homes and relations. He found places for those who were out of work, or secured better ones where they were not satisfied with the character of the employer. In fact he made himself thoroughly acquainted with the condition of all his boys and quite established himself in their estimation as their protector and guide.

During the course of that first winter, Don Bosco took steps to give some solidity to his Oratory. His attention was principally directed to the boys at work, or released from prison and such like, but in order to infuse a better spirit into them, and to establish some regular discipline, he invited to his Oratory several others of a better class, of good conduct, and advanced in their studies. He initiated these into the methods of maintaining interest and order, they helped him with the instruction, and particularly with the music and singing, which he regarded as the life and soul of an Oratory. He wrote some words for the Christmas of 1842 and set them to music. It was sung by twenty boys first in the Dominican Church and then at the Consolata, Don Bosco being both organist and conductor. The Turin people were not accustomed to such young singers and the music was so much appreciated that the Oratory became known all over the town, and attracted many boys.

In his memoirs he refers to the advantages which already manifested themselves as a result of these tentative efforts, and they are confirmed by the above-mentioned Carlo Buzzetti, who relates that even the most ignorant and ungovernable were soon so changed, that they would not absent themselves on any account from the Oratory meetings, and began to attend the Sacraments on Sundays and week-days. Canon Anfossi says: "I myself saw big, unruly lads, who after a few weeks became well-behaved and practical Catholics." This bears out what Don Bosco had himself written, partly for his own direction, soon after his ordination:

"The young, who form the most cherished and most attractive portion of human society, and in whom are centred all our hopes for a happy future, are by no means intrinsically perverse or inclined to wickedness. Once you have counteracted the carelessness of some parents, the effects of idleness and of evil companions, it becomes the easiest thing imaginable to instil into

their young hearts the principles of order, of good behaviour of respect towards others, and to accustom them to the practice of religion; and if you should meet any who are already spoiled at that tender age, it is the result of neglect rather than of downright wickedness. These are the ones who especially need a helping hand; the difficulty lies in finding the means of gathering them together in order to speak to them and control them. This was the mission the Son of God took upon himself; this can be done by His Holy Religion alone, which is eternal and unchangeable in itself, which was and always will be the teacher of mankind which contains a doctrine so perfect that it is suited to all times and adapted to the different characters of all men. Among the means suitable for the diffusion of the spirit of religion among theuntaught and ill-disposed will be found the *Oratories*."

As long as the Oratory was held at the Church of St. Francis at Assisi all went well, although some were already complaining of the noise made by the youngsters. The Archbishop, Don Gualand Don Cafasso regarded the movement most favourably and defended it whenever they had the opportunity. But the time came when, in 1844, Don Bosco's course of studies was completed and he had to leave the Institute attached to St. Francis'. In order to remain in the city, he would have to take up work there, and so he accepted the chaplaincy of St. Philomena's Hospital founded by the Marchioness Barolo. He was recommended for this by Don Cafasso, but he feared as to whether his boys would follow him there, or whether he would find accommodation for them.

The boys soon solved his doubts in regard to the first point for they followed him at once to the Hospital, and appeared in even greater numbers. He devoted the whole of Sunday to them. There was one drawback, but it was a very serious one. As he had now no chapel at his disposal in which to gather them together for Mass, he had to have recourse to the expedient of taking them

various churches in the city. The Marchioness Barolo then gave Don Bosco leave to adapt two rooms at the Hospital for his services. The chapel was opened on December 8th 1844, the third anniversary of the Sacristy incident, which has come to be regarded as the foundation of the Oratories. It was dedicated to St. Francis of Sales, by whose name the Oratories were henceforth known.

Don Bosco had considered this dedication for some time. He knew every detail of the life and writings of the Apostle of the Savoyais, and admired his sweetness of character, which had exercised such influence over the heretics, and which was not a virtue or gift natural to the saint, but a well-earned conquest of virtue over a proud and choleric disposition. He regarded the great Bishop as the model of the educative art and the example of that discipline of the spirit which was so necessary to himself, considering the natural impetuosity of his character. But he was waiting for Don Cafasso to suggest a dedication spontaneously, and the day while this priest was talking to Don Borel in the presence of Don Bosco, he proposed St. Francis of Sales as a protector and patron for the Oratory. This coincidence between his own idea and that of his spiritual guide Don Bosco regarded as a sign from heaven and he followed the suggestion.

So far a remedy had been found for all difficulties. The new premises were by no means vast, and it was clear that at some future date they would be too small; but at present Don Bosco regarded them as so far suitable that he contemplated an addition to their scope. This was the opening of evening classes, for he soon saw that, apart from Religion, a great number of the boys who met with were quite ignorant of any other usual subject of knowledge, — a great drawback to advancement in their trades, and their general improvement in life.

In various rooms of the Hospital he and Don Borel now began

to give evening lessons to the boys up till a late hour, and the programme included something of many subjects. There was an idea of giving evening classes anywhere in Italy at that time, but they had their origin there, and spread from the Oratory over the country. In 1847, three years later, when these classes were regularly organised at the Oratory, they gave an excellent account of themselves at an experiment conducted in the presence of a commission appointed by the Municipality, for the express purpose of ascertaining whether the results claimed for them were real or exaggerated. The examination was given in various subjects and the Commission declared that they could not understand how young men, of no previous education whatever, could make such marvellous progress in so short a time. But they did not rest satisfied with admiration. Shortly afterwards, Professor Gonerio, who had been present at the test, introduced evening classes in the Institute he directed, and in 1848, the example given by Don Bosco was followed by the Municipality of Turin.

But the era of peace enjoyed by Don Bosco almost unbroken since 1845 was destined to pass away.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE WANDERINGS OF THE ORATORY.

THE MARCHIONESS BAROLO had indeed given Don Bosco the means of livelihood and his work at the Hospital, but she could have preferred him to rest satisfied with that occupation and not worry about others. She feared moreover that the numbers of boys who now frequented his Oratory would disturb her Institute overmuch, and so after a few months she desired him to find her quarters for it.

His first attempt to find a home took him to the church of the Cemetery of St. Peter in Chains, and to the ground attached to it. But he could only go there once. The Chaplain's house-keeper took exception to the noise of the playing of so many boys; he began by upbraiding them in no uncertain fashion, and then prevailed upon the Chaplain to lodge a complaint with the Municipality who had granted the use of the place. In her mistaken rage she said: "By Sunday next, at whatever cost, I shall not be disturbed by you." Don Bosco turned to the boys, — who stood around, listening with mixed feelings of anger and distress — and said: "Poor woman, she is right, by next Sunday she will not be here to see us." And during that week both servant and chaplain died.

However he could no longer count upon that locality. He obtained leave from the Municipality to use the Church of St. Martin near the Dora; but as the boys seemed discouraged at not having any fixed place he said to them: "You know, my dear boys, that abbages do not become full and large, unless they are transplanted, and this applies to our Oratory. Up till now it has been moved

from place to place, and in every one of them, it has increased remarkably. The time spent at the Hospital was not without good results, and there, as at St. Francis of Assisi, you had spiritual and temporal assistance, improvement of both body and soul, catechism and instruction, games and sports. At the Hospital a beginning was made of a real Oratory; there we had a church to ourselves, in a suitable and retired place, and it appeared that we had found a peaceful and lasting abode; but Divine Providence has disposed that we should leave it and be transplanted here. Shall we be here long? We do not know. But whatever happens, we hope that, like the transplanted cabbages, our Oratory will increase in the number of boys devoted to the practice of virtue, improving in their knowledge of music and other subjects, and that we shall have in time not only Sunday and evening schools but day-schools as well. So do not let us be downhearted. Let us put all our trust in God, and He will take care of us."

The catechism and recreations were held in the open ground near St. Martin's, but they could not go on after the autumn of 1845. The people of the neighbourhood soon had enough of the noise of three hundred boys at play. Nevertheless the one who was deputed to lay the complaint before the Municipality was soon afterwards struck down with a disease, which took from him the means of livelihood. Don Bosco revenged himself by constantly assisting the unfortunate man.

During the winter he rented some rooms in a house belonging to a Signor Moretta, where in after years there was opened the girl's Oratory of St. Angela in Via Cottolengo. But there was no place that could be used as a chapel, so he had to take his boys to the Consolata, where the Oblates of Mary did all that he could to make suitable arrangements for them. But in the meantime the numbers went on increasing, and the classes and teachers increased accordingly.

Soon, another removal. The noise disturbed the neighbours again, but as the weather was now mild and fine, Don Bosco took a field, where an iron-foundry now stands.

But even that place was only to be a temporary one. The owner of the field complained that the boys trampled it too badly and gave notice for them to go. Moreover Don Bosco's very tenure of his rooms at the Hospital was threatened, for the Marchioness Carolo gave him the option of keeping his appointment and giving up the boys entirely, or of staying with his boys and leaving the Institute. She gave him three months to think it over. But heavy clouds were rising in other quarters.

A political persecution suddenly broke out, and its instigator was a man of religious temperament and an ultra-conservative, the Prefect of Turin — the Marquis di Cavour, father of the famous Camillus Cavour. He sent for Don Bosco and accused him of disturbing the public peace. He must therefore disband the Oratory; and when Don Bosco calmly defended it, showing that it rather helped to maintain the public order, and that its various departments had worked great good among the very youths who might be a danger to the public, the Marquis became incensed and threatened Don Bosco with imprisonment. But without any loss of composure he replied: "Oh no! They send evil-doers to prison, not a priest who is striving to do some good, and who is in complete accord with his Archbishop." This dignified behaviour calmed somewhat the fury of the Prefect, and he dismissed him. When he found that King Charles Albert regarded Don Bosco with favour, Cavour gave up all idea of threats, but this did not prevent him from setting secret guards to watch the Oratory and its doings. Don Bosco knew quite well who these emissaries were, and the object of their spying. But the only result was to turn these agents into fervent admirers of the one on whom they were bent to spy.

But Cavour had forgotten all about Don Bosco when a more powerful opposition arose — that of the clergy.

Among the parish-priests of Turin there were some who, though they were personal friends of Don Bosco, yet regarded the Oratory as a sort of competition with their churches, and threatened remonstrated with the Archbishop. They alleged that there were as many teachers of Catechism at Valdocco, as in nearly all the churches of Turin together. "To whom does the office of teaching religion belong?" they asked, "Is it not the place of the parish-priests to say who is prepared to receive the Sacraments? How are we to know who has fulfilled the Easter precept and who has not? Would it not be better to send Don Bosco to some country district in the mountains as an assistant-priest?"

Don Bosco answered these objections by showing that a greater number of his boys belonged to no regular parish in the city, and that the others were entirely neglected by their parents. He was not listened to. He then invited a parish-priest to visit the Oratory and satisfy himself on the point. He went there and began to ask the boys to what parishes they belonged. One came from Biella, another from Como, another from Genoa and so on. Then he asked them where they lived, now that they had come to Turin to work. Some knew the names of the streets, but had never heard to what parish these streets belonged. Others had changed their domicile several times, and changed it whenever the locality of their work was moved; others got lodgings for the night wherever they could. Some were no longer living with their relations, others had lost them, others never knew them.

This priest was satisfied; but another was not. Don Bosco sent to him all the boys who lived in his parish. When he saw this crowd of youngsters coming to him, he asked somewhat sharply :

"What do you all want?"

"To be examined in Catechism, before our First Communion."

The priest sent them away as he had no time just then, and the boys went back to Don Bosco. When the latter found that they had not told the priest who had sent them, he made them go back again and ask him in his name to have the goodness to examine them.

They obeyed, but instead of the parish-priest, they found one of the assistants, and when they had repeated their request in the name of Don Bosco, he looked them up and down in surprise. They were all big lads, some even showing signs of a moustache. The priest rebuked them for not having made their First Communion several years before, and the boys returned to Don Bosco saying they would not go again to be examined. Don Bosco then referred the matter to the Archbishop.

However, as his work went on developing, he sometimes indulged in the enterprising novelties which characterised him, thus becoming in reality more and more himself, if more unique; but unless one had in mind the results obtained, one would be inclined to regard his methods as somewhat strange.

Sometimes he would leave the ninety-nine to his assistants, and go about the neighbourhood of the meeting-place to find the one that still remained to be found. He would sometimes approach a little group of lads, intent upon playing some game of chance, on the pavement. He would join them carelessly enough, and when an opportunity came he would play also. When the money was all laid out upon the handkerchief, and the game was proceeding, he would suddenly seize the handkerchief and set off as fast as he could run.

The youths would be at first lost in amazement, but would then run after him, calling for their money. Don Bosco was a far better runner than any of them. He would glance round from side to side and say: "Don't be afraid, I am not going to steal your money; come with me and you will get it all."

Thus he would lead them on to the Oratory. Arrived there he would interrupt the catechism, or the sermon, and change into a dialogue upon gambling, or swearing or the like. The boys would stop on hearing this, and would eventually see the point and sit down to listen. After the dialogue the Litany would be sung, Don Bosco remaining among his boys. When that was finished one of the new-comers would say :

" Well, and when will you give us our money? " Don Bosco made answer : " Just a moment, there is Benediction. "

Finally he would take them outside, give them back their money with a little extra, and get them to promise to come to the Oratory. The manner of the priest invariably made the boys his friends even afterwards.

Don Bosco used to say that in order to do good, a little courage is necessary and one must be prepared to suffer some mortification but should never mortify others.

Not content with going about the country places, he would sometimes visit inns and ordinary drinking-houses. The owners would be surprised to see a priest enter, and when he came forward to get the order, Don Bosco would get into conversation with him. The men would soon leave their tables to learn what the priest wanted in such a place. Then he would engage them all in general conversation, getting round gradually to religion, so that in the end he would ask them if they had made their Easter duties and it was very seldom that he did not get several to promise to go to the Sacraments. If there were any youths there, they generally went back with him to the Oratory.

The boys who were apprenticed to the barbers were taken under his special care. He would go into a shop to be shaved especially the most frequented ones, and the barber would politely pray him to be seated until he could attend to him.

Then Don Bosco would glance in the direction of the boy w

was stropping the razors and say : " I'm in a hurry ; but you go on with these gentlemen, the boy over there can shave well enough for me." The barber would remonstrate that the boy was only a learner and would give him a very uncomfortable time.

" Never mind," Don Bosco would reply : " He seems an intelligent lad, and my beard is not a strong one ; if you let him try I am sure he will be successful."

During the painful operation he would talk to the boy, so that at the end of the shave the Oratory counted another adherent.

One morning Don Bosco was stopped outside the City by four young men of suspicious appearance. They had a dispute for him to settle, or pretended they had. Don Bosco sought an excuse to get them out of that lonely quarter, and replied that it was uncomfortable arguing on one's feet, but if they would go on a little way he would treat them to a cup of coffee, and they could discuss the matter in comfort. The young men agreed and walked on while he engaged them in conversation. Presently they passed a church, and he proposed that they should all go in and say an *Ave Maria*. The leader said he was trying to draw out of his promise, but he assured them that he was a man of his word, only it was a priest's word, and therefore he asked them in return to say an *Ave Maria*. They did so, though not without reluctance. The café being reached they went in, and having satisfied them, Don Bosco invited them all down to his house for further refreshments. They agreed, and being now quite friendly, all proceeded to Valdocco. While there he asked them about the Sacraments and pointed out the danger of the life they were leading. They looked at each other in surprise, and one said :

" If we could find a priest like you, we should go to confession readily enough."

" Well here I am," said Don Bosco, and he got them to prepare themselves, and three of the four went to confession before

they left the house. They promised to return to see him, and kept their word.

Another time on a dark night a man stopped him in a lonely place and demanded money. Don Bosco got him into conversation, led him to see the evil consequences of his manner of life, and made him kneel down in a retired spot and go to confession there and then.

These little variations from the normal procedure, and the continued failure to secure a permanent habitation raised no opposition, and it was the more to be feared since it came from persons who wished him well. Some of his friends advised the abandonment of the movement; then, seeing that he was entirely wrapped up in it, that every thought and action were in some way directed towards securing its advancement, that he was continually surrounded by crowds of boys, that it was his one topic with everyone he met, they feared that it had become a monomania. Some of those who had been his fellow-seminarists upbraided him with lowering the dignity of the Turin clergy; but when Don Bosco failed to be convinced that he had done so, and had rather the better of the argument, they concluded that his brain was affected.

His old friend and devoted assistant, Don Borel, also came to degrees to regard the enterprise as hopeless. He urged Don Bosco to abandon it, and only to keep about twenty of the very youngest who could be looked after privately. God would give them the means in due time. To this Don Bosco replied:

"No, no, God has begun the work, and He must complete it. You know what trouble it has cost us to get these boys together, and what good it has done them, and would you now abandon them to their previous condition?"

"But, where are we to hold our meetings?"

"In the new Oratory."

"And where is that?"

"I see it already built; I see the Church, a house and playground. I see the whole Oratory."

"But I ask you again, where do you see all these fine things?"

"I cannot yet say where, but they do exist and they are for us."

At this Don Borel said to himself: "Poor Don Bosco, his mind is really going." And with a word of farewell, he went off, overcome with emotion. Other friends too left him at this time. They did not know that Don Bosco had seen the new Oratory in a recent dream, in which his Confessor, Don Cafasso, ever prudent, had told him he might trust.

Other priests, some of them the principal clergy of the Diocese, went together to see him, and respectfully pointed out what a great deal of good he might accomplish in other positions. As Don Bosco listened in silence, they thought they had persuaded him and said:

"You should not act obstinately: one cannot achieve the impossible, and Divine Providence itself seems clearly to show its disapproval of your work. It will be a sacrifice to send away your boys, but you must do it."

Then Don Bosco raised his hands, and with almost a supernatural look in his eyes he said:

"You speak of Divine Providence, but mistakenly; I am by no means unable to carry on the work of the Oratory. Providence has sent me all these boys and I shall not send even one of them away; you may be assured of that. I am perfectly certain that God will provide me with what is necessary..... The means are already prepared..... And if they will not let me hire a place I shall build one, with the help of Our Blessed Lady. We shall have great buildings, capable of holding all the boys who like to come; we shall have workshops of every kind, so that the boys

may learn whatever trade they choose; there will be a fine playground and portico, a magnificent church, clerics, assistants, heads of trades, masters, and priests who will have special care of those who have a vocation."

One can imagine the effect upon the visitors.

"Then you intend to found a new Order?"

"And what if I should have such an idea?" said Don Bosco.

"What will be the habit of your religious?"

"Virtue," replied Don Bosco.

"Very good, but something else will be necessary."

"Then I should wish them to have a sort of overall with sleeves like the workmen."

A loud laugh greeted this reply. Don Bosco joined in it; then he asked:

"Does that strike you as being strange? But you must surely know that such a garb represents poverty, and that a religious order cannot last without being true to the spirit of poverty."

"We understand perfectly," said the visitors as they rose to go, more than ever convinced of Don Bosco's madness. They spread this conviction throughout the city, but he took no notice of it. His friends began to avoid him, and soon the Archiepiscopal Curia sent a person of high standing to make a serious examination to save the honour and dignity of the priesthood. He received the same impression, yet the Curia still remained undecided, particularly because the Vicar General, Don Ravina, was very friendly with Don Bosco and would not allow any precipitate action.

But what these were loth to undertake, other priests of high standing undertook to accomplish. At the end of one of their theological conferences, the conversation turned on Don Bosco and they decided that the only thing to be done was to get him to an asylum, where he might have every attention becoming his position. Negotiations were made with the superintendent, and

everything was arranged. Two priests were charged to take him there in a closed carriage.

These two went accordingly to Valdocco to put the plan into execution. They were received by Don Bosco, and began to discuss the Oratory and heard all about his future plans. They saw that there was evidently no improvement or return to sanity. Meanwhile Don Bosco had noticed their exchange of glances, and reflecting upon this unexpected visit of courtesy, he guessed they were of the party who thought him mad. But he pretended not to suspect anything and waited for the sequel. Presently the visitors asked him to come out for a drive, as they had a carriage, and they thought a little fresh air would do him good. Don Bosco now saw the whole plan, but he accepted, and went out with them to the carriage. The courteous gentlemen desired him to enter first. But Don Bosco declared this would be a lack of respect and insisted that they should enter first. They did so, quite unsuspecting, and as soon as they were in, Don Bosco slammed the carriage-door, and told the driver to go direct to the Asylum, where these two were expected.

The whip cracked and off went the horses; the two priests called out in vain. The asylum was reached and they drove in without stopping, while the porter hurriedly shut the gates. The attendants surrounded the carriage in an instant, for they had been warned of the arrival, but finding two visitors, and not being able to decide which was the patient, they conducted them to the office. There they protested, but to no purpose; the attendants were quite used to such protests. They demanded that the doctor should be called, but he was not in the house; the chaplain, but he was at dinner. The affair began to be serious when the chaplain finally arrived on the scene, verified the mistake, laughed long and loudly, and had them set at liberty.

Their feelings towards Don Bosco, who had made such fools

of them, may be easily imagined. They kept out of his way in the streets whenever they saw him coming along. But it had served its purpose. No one afterwards displayed such zeal, and Don Bosco and the question of his sanity were no longer discussed. Still the problem of a permanent place was yet unsolved. On the last Sunday of his tenure of the field he took them to Mass at Our Lady *di Campagna*. In his discourse there he compared them to birds whose nest had been destroyed, and recommended them to pray that they might find a more lasting one. When they were back in the field in the evening, and were playing about, heedless of the morrow, Don Bosco was a little distance away, sad at heart. Presently a man approached and told him that near by, there was an outhouse to be let from a man named Pinardi. Don Bosco went immediately to see it; terms were at once agreed upon, and he went back to the field to announce it to the boys amid general acclamation. They were to enter into possession on the following Sunday — Easter Day, April 12th, 1846. It was the first step towards a permanent habitation.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ORATORY AND THE SCHOOL.

A BRIEF account of this so much appreciated Oratory must be given. It was a sort of shed, about three feet high at one end, and a little more at the other. When Don Bosco went into it for the first time he had to be very careful not to knock his head against the roof. It had no floor save the damp ground, and when it rained it became a small lake on which a boat would be necessary. Don Bosco noticed rats underfoot, and bats flying round his head. Yet he was satisfied with it. "This shall be the chapel," he said. "It will be poor, like the stable at Bethlehem." In the course of a week a great transformation was effected; workmen dug out the soil, the walls were strengthened, lofts were erected. Don Bosco and his boys and the owner, all gave their services. By Easter Sunday the benches were brought in from the Hospital, Don Bosco blessed the chapel, by authority of the Archbishop, dedicated it to St. Francis of Sales, and offered the first Mass, at which there were present hundreds of boys, and the neighbours and some of his well-wishers from the city.

His Sunday and evening classes were again begun. Don Bosco hired some rooms in the house near by, and kept hiring more as soon as the tenants left. He had by now some boys sufficiently advanced to be able to teach the others, and soon the Oratory was in full swing.

But now when a favourable wind seemed to have brought prosperity, there came a new and more serious calamity. The work itself appeared to be left in peace, only that the life of the founder might be attacked. We have seen some of the anxieties which

Don Bosco had to bear, the constant labour and effort. He had spent the nights in study and writing, since the day-time was too short. And consequently he fell ill. In a week he was at the point of death, and the Last Sacraments were administered. His mother had come to Turin to nurse him and Don Borel remained constantly beside him. As the doctors had forbidden anyone else to be admitted, there were no other attendants, but there was many an anxious watcher outside the walls of the Hospital where he lay. The boys gathered there in large numbers and mingled their prayers with their lamentations.

One Saturday night in July Don Borel asked Don Bosco to pray for his own cure. He only replied: "May the will of God be done!" But Don Borel insisted. Just say with me: "Lord, if you wish it, make me recover." Don Bosco agreed and said it. Soon after, an improvement was apparent, and so rapid was the cure, that many considered it supernatural. It was presently announced to the boys that on the following Sunday he would return to the Oratory. When he came out of the Hospital he found that the boys had strewn all the way with flowers, and as the help of a stick was to little purpose in his weak state, the bigger boys made him sit in a chair, which they hoisted on their shoulders, and bore him to the Oratory in this species of *sedia-gestatoria*. When he entered the Oratory the *Te Deum* was intoned amid universal rejoicing.

In the month of August he left Turin for his home at Becchi, to complete his convalescence. One evening, while returning home from a walk in the woods he was surprised by a voice crying out: "Your money, or your life!" and the threat was strengthened by the brandishing of a large knife by the robber.

Recovering from his surprise Don Bosco calmly replied: "Friend, neither the one, nor the other; and is it you indeed who would wish to do harm to Don Bosco?" He recognised the robber

one of the young men whom he had attended in the prison at Turin. The other looked carefully at the priest, then lowered his threatening arm and stood abashed and humiliated. He said he had been rejected by his family on the completion of his sentence, and, despairing of ever improving his condition, had taken to evil ways again. Don Bosco asked him if he had forgotten how many times he had restored him to peace of mind and to good resolutions; he said he would again put matters right, and sitting on a stone he begged him to kneel down and go to confession. Then he told him to come with him, and when his mother met him at the gate, considering what had detained him, he said: "I met a friend of mine and we stopped to chat, and I have persuaded him to come along with me." This introduction of his guest deceived no one, the man, though invited to supper, was too much moved to refuse and seemed to be overcome with remorse at the thought of the crime he might have committed. Don Bosco's brother, while appreciating the act of charity, kept watch at night to see that the stranger did no harm; but the latter, though unable to sleep, remained quiet. In the morning he was calmer, he heard Mass, and was able to take some food. Then Don Bosco sent him away, with a letter of recommendation to his parish-priest, the effect of which was to open the doors of his home to him again, and there the prodigal son made up for his past, by an exemplary life.

Don Bosco's health was anything but recovered. He could not return to the Oratory, although all his interests were centred there. He frequently sent letters to be read to the boys, containing instructions and recommendations, but he had perforce to leave his work in the hands of Don Borel and his assistants. But if he felt that his stock of patience was lessening, his boys soon exhausted theirs entirely. They sent a deputation to him saying: "Either you must return to Turin or we shall transport the Oratory to Becchi." The Archbishop and Don Cafasso warned him not

to entertain the idea of returning. He wrote to them : " You must give me permission to return where I am called by God. He is omnipotent and whether He raises up or strikes down, He knows how to support me and to give me the health required. And even if I should succumb, what would it matter? I do not fear the consequences which you point out, nor do I hold my life to be more precious than my ministry; I would rather be content to finish my life thus in the service of these boys. "

The Archbishop and Don Cafasso had to yield to this appeal, for they feared that what his health might gain by rest, would be lost by his being unsettled. However, as the time allowed him by the Marchioness di Barolo had expired, he could not go back to his rooms at the hospital. He thought he could manage better in some rooms near the Oratory itself — only it would be necessary to have someone to look after him, and to attend to the thousand-and-one needs of his boys. He spoke of this to the parish-priest at Castelnovo, who at once replied : " Why not take your mother with you? " Don Bosco thought over this proposal. He saw its obvious advantages, but it would be a heavy sacrifice to ask from her. He was unwilling to entertain the proposal. However, when he forced himself to mention it, she accepted it at once, for she believed that it was the will of God. Great opposition was raised by the neighbours in all directions; but she took no heed; on November 3rd 1846, Don Bosco and his mother went down the hills from Castelnovo towards Turin, on foot, in apostolic fashion. They carried a few things with them.

Near the city they were met by Don Vola, who expressed surprise at their dusty condition. Don Bosco explained that they had come from the country, and had come on foot because they had no money for a carriage. The good priest soon discovered that they were going to a house quite unprepared, and that Don Bosco, had no salary or means of any kind to provide

wants. Divine Providence was being called upon for every-  
g. Don Vola felt in his pockets. He had brought no money.  
n he took out his watch and gave it to Don Bosco telling him  
ell it, and it would provide for one day's necessities. The  
r declined it, but he refused to be put off. Don Bosco then  
pted it and gave it to his mother saying : " Providence is making  
ginning very quickly! "

The hundred needs of such an establishment as Don Bosco's  
home, with boys continually about, made short work of any  
is they could get together. Their little property at Becchi was  
n, then Mamma Margaret's personal belongings went, and noth-  
remained. But they were both most pleased when their  
erty was at its worst, and when their demands upon Providence  
e made with hands absolutely empty. Don Bosco gave little  
d to the admonitions to take care of his health. Many years  
wards he said to Don Lemoyne : " At first I really meant to  
as far as possible, but when I saw what a great deal there  
to do, and that Don Borel and his assistants had as much as  
could manage, I could no longer remain idle. I therefore  
up all my usual work, and for over twenty-five years I have  
no need of doctors or medicines, a circumstance which makes  
believe that properly conducted work does not bring any bodily  
n. "

In the meantime he began to see that it was not sufficient to  
er boys together on Sundays, and to leave them all the rest  
he week without care or guidance. Having a house, and his  
her to look after it, who regarded his boys with as much  
ction as he did, he seemed to regard these as a treasure which  
h should also enjoy. Having five loaves and a few fishes, he  
ned to think that the one thing necessary was to gather in  
hole multitude, that so rich a store should not be wasted.

One evening in April 1847 he met a number of young fellows on the road, who began to make fun of the priest. He did not try to avoid them, but went into the middle and bade them go to the evening. They at once commenced to joke, and asked him to stand them a drink. Don Bosco agreed at once, and took them into an inn, not far off. He called the proprietor and ordered a bottle of wine, and then another, and when they had become quite friendly, he said he had a favour to ask. Of course they all agreed to grant it, and he made them promise not to blaspheme any more as some of them had done that evening in conversation. Then he bade them go to their homes as the night was coming on.

To his surprise he found that the majority had no homes, and slept wherever they found it convenient. These he invited to accompany him and took them to Valdocco. He made them join with him in night prayers which they had nearly forgotten, and then took them up to the loft by a ladder and gave out sheets and coverings. Bidding them good night he came down quite happy, having begun, as he thought, his home for boys. But in the morning when he went up the ladder to bid them good morning and to send them off to their work, he was surprised at the silence of the place. Going into the loft he found that they had all gone without making a sound, and had taken his bed-clothes with them. His first attempt at a Home had not been altogether successful.

But one evening in May, when it was getting dark, and it was raining in torrents, a boy came to the door. He was drenched and starving. Don Bosco and his mother welcomed him with questions, dried his clothes and gave him food. Then Don Bosco discovered that he was homeless and friendless, and when a proposal was made that he should stay there for the night Don Bosco said :

"The last ones I had here stole my sheets and blankets, and I do not care about losing the remainder."

"You need have no fear," the boy replied, "I am poor, but I am not a thief." It was therefore decided that he should stay in the kitchen that night, and he had a home with Don Bosco till winter, when he went back to his native place. His name is unknown, and he was not heard of afterwards. Don Bosco took about seven other boys in much the same circumstances, and the schools at Valdocco which subsequently accommodated a thousand boys had this lowly origin.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE METHOD OF EDUCATION AT THE ORATORY

THE Oratory at Valdocco not only increased and became gradually organised but received a sort of official baptism in regard to its progress as a factor in education.

We have already referred to the examination of his evening schools held in 1847. Don Bosco wished the boys at the Oratory to undergo a further test, and he invited several prominent personages to conduct it. Among these were such well-known men as Don Aporti; the deputy, Signor Boncompagni, who was afterwards an ambassador, a member of the Chamber and of the Ministry, and also the prominent educator, Signor Rayneri. The latter, when lecturing at the University, said to those who were taking up teaching as a profession: "If you wish to see instruction carried on with marvellous success you should go to the Oratory and see what Don Bosco does."

After some time Don Bosco perceived that one Oratory was not enough, particularly as its position was not at all convenient from many parts of the city. So he opened another where the Church of St. John the Evangelist now stands. It was dedicated to St. Aloysius and he announced its opening to the boys in these terms:

"My dear boys, when the bees in a hive become too numerous, some of them form a new family and fly away elsewhere. As you see we have now such large numbers that we have hardly room to turn. The play-ground is over-crowded, and in the chapel we are like sardines in a box. We cannot enlarge it by pushing, or it would tumble upon us. We must therefore imitate the bees and make another home by opening a second Oratory."

In 1849 a third Oratory was opened in Vanchiglia : it was dedicated to the Guardian Angels. But in the meantime, while awaiting the day when his schools and Oratories would be spread in many countries, the method of education and control to be adopted in them, and to be used later in his colleges and seminaries, was already clearly traced out by him.

When it is said that Don Bosco's great gift was to have understood the times in which he lived, and to have been perfectly up-to-date in his ideas, this must be properly understood. He studied modern needs so that he might be able to adapt his methods to them, but these methods were deduced from a wisdom that is ever ancient and ever new. He who, from his very boyhood, had invented new and strange methods of getting together his companions, had done so solely for the purpose of leading them to the practice of piety ; who, again, as a seminarist and priest, if he admired or imitated anyone, did so solely for their virtue, saw in piety alone the key to a successful education. The combination of the virtues which should form the type of a perfect man, he saw only in him who lives constantly in the presence and grace of God. The methods thought out by an educator, who is cognisant of modern demands, which provide for the discipline to be maintained among the pupils, the relations between them and the superiors, and the knowledge to be imparted, these methods, according to Don Bosco, can have no special claim to preference unless they are modernised attempts to achieve the one end — as old as the teaching of the saints — to make the young grow up in virtue. All the endowments which, combined into a whole, produce a character which is perfect from a human, civil and moral aspect, all are the outcome of piety. In a word Don Bosco sought to adapt every new plan in the practice of education to the development of virtue. In this as in other ages, God himself would make of the man who approaches nearest to him the type which the

most fastidious educator could desire. Don Bosco used to say "Frequent Confession and Communion are the pillars of a house of education..... They throw into relief the beauty, the grandeur, the sanctity of that Religion which provides means so easy of attainment, so beneficial to society, so conducive to peace of heart and to the salvation of the soul as are the Holy Sacraments."

The eulogy pronounced by Don Semeria on the occasion of the centenary of Cardinal Massaia in 1909, may be applied to Don Bosco :

"If I restrict my description of the Cardinal to his apostolic zeal and his apostolic works, do not think that I wish to lessen his grandeur, by leaving aside his other manifold benefits to society. Just as a great poet has no need to be anything else but just a poet, a faithful interpreter of the purest beauty, in order that he may have a lasting influence upon every form of individual and social activity; so Christianity need only be simply itself, or rather its sons need only be really Christian, to draw from the Gospel every beneficial human endeavour." And Manzoni has implicitly approved Don Bosco's criterion, for he recognised that to render man faithful to God is the justification of a progress which comprises that of education, namely the progress of the entire civilisation. According to him the worth and superior origin of this civilisation is to be judged from its power as an aid to render men virtuous.

Desiring, then, to reconcile *nova et vetera*, Don Bosco examined the principles which governed other educational Institutes both old and new, before he fixed the regulations which should control his Oratories. The older methods were adopted at a time when the greater number of families gave the children some elementary Christian teaching, and took care that they attended the Church. Then it was an easy task at the school or church to cultivate the good seed implanted in their hearts. But nowadays

it is not simply a question of cultivating, for many parents neglect to give any religious instruction at all, or to give any training in the practices of religion; it is necessary to give the elementary and fundamental knowledge. He therefore sought to find a substitute for the parish-church with all its functions, and to supply at the same time for the parental authority which is not sufficiently exercised. The means to obtain these ends were already to some extent in practice. Don Bosco extended them, and devised an Oratory to be at the children's disposal the whole of the Sunday. The modern Oratory should welcome the backward and the wayward, care being taken that they do not influence the good, but that they become influenced for the better by good example and by emulation; and on this plan other principles of guidance were founded.

Don Bosco's method was by degrees fully developed. His Oratories, much the same as his Schools, must have a complete staff: a Director, a Prefect, a Spiritual Director, Teachers, Assistants, masters of recreation, etc. He desired that many should be interested in and watch over the welfare of the boys, that rewards should be given, and special confidence reposed in those who showed themselves worthy, so that they might be more and more attracted to the Oratory.

From his own experience, and from his comparison with other methods Don Bosco compiled his "Preventive system in the education of the young," which should be noticed carefully in any study of his work.

He compares the repressive system with the preventive, and in regard to the latter he says: "Quite different and indeed opposite is the preventive system. It consists in making the regulations known, and then exercising such watchfulness, that the pupils shall never be out of the sight of the Director and

his assistants, who are to act with the solicitude of a father, as a guide under all circumstances, to counsel and correct with prudence and gentleness; and this means in short, that the pupils will be practically prevented from serious faults. This system is based upon sound reason, religion and kindness, and therefore excludes all severe punishments, and seeks to avoid even light ones."

The system was developed in detail in a work written by Don Bosco himself, and it received the approval of all the leading educators of his time.

One morning in April 1854 Signor Rattazzi, who in the following year became Minister of the Interior, and a colleague of Cavour paid a visit, incognito, to the Oratory. He was present at the recreation, and then made Don Bosco describe to him the history of his work and the methods he employed. After hearing everything he said :

"This certainly seems the method to be adopted with persons who can use their reason, but is it suitable to all?"

Don Bosco replied that it was entirely successful with ninety per cent, and that the others were made more tractable, so that it was a most rare thing that he had to dismiss a boy as incorrigible. In each of the Oratories he had boys who were quite unmanageable in their homes, and were despaired of by their masters; but after a few weeks they had become completely changed and were as well-behaved as any.

"It is a pity," said Rattazzi, "that the Government does not introduce such a system into its Houses of Correction. There hundreds of warders are necessary, and yet the inmates go from bad to worse."

"And why should the Government not adopt it by introducing religious instruction and arrangements for the practices of Religion? It would lessen the work of the warders and reform man

criminals, so that they would be restored to society as useful and respectable members. It would remedy the present anomaly, by which so much is paid for the punishment of the guilty, and yet they are more dangerous than ever after their supposed correction. ”

The most convincing test of the method was a case in which this same Urban Rattazzi had a share. It is an episode celebrated in the history of prison life, and referred to by the *Prison Bulletin* when Don Bosco died.

In the Easter of 1855 Don Bosco had been asked to give a course of sermons to some three hundred or more young delinquents in the prison called *La Generala*. His method of speaking and dealing with them had touched their hearts, and made them as docile as though he had had charge of them for a long while. Without any warders in the church or at recreation, for those three or four days Don Bosco's control was so wonderful as to be a subject of complete surprise to the authorities. He wished to reward the youths for their good conduct, so he went to the Governor and made this strange proposal : “ Will you permit me to take them out for a day? We shall go for a long walk into the country, leaving early in the morning and returning at night. It will be good both for soul and body. ”

The Governor was dumbfounded : “ But are you serious, Father? ”

“ Never more so, ” replied Don Bosco, and he repeated his request.

“ But do you not know that I am responsible for anyone missing? ”

“ You need have no fear of anyone running away ; I will undertake to bring them all back. ”

The Governor entrenched himself, as was natural, behind the stringency of the Regulations, and it was a great concession that he promised to mention it to Rattazzi, the Minister of the Interior.

Such a permission in fact rested with the Prefect of the Province, and Don Bosco laid the proposal before him. A firm negative was the reply.

The Governor of the Prison kept his word about laying the matter before the Minister, and the latter, bearing in mind what he had seen of the power of Don Bosco over large numbers of boys, sent for him and said :

" A proposal has recently been made to me in your name. I am willing to accede to it and shall give the necessary orders. Some soldiers in disguise will follow you to assist you in maintaining discipline, should it be necessary, and also to secure that all return to prison. "

The Minister stopped and regarded Don Bosco with a look which meant : " What more could you desire ? " But Don Bosco smiled, on hearing about the soldiers, and replied :

" Oh no, Signor ; I am most grateful to you, but it will be necessary for me to go alone with the young men. You must give me your word of honour not to send any public guard whatever. I shall take all responsibility and if anything happens you can put me in prison. "

The Minister showed more and more surprise as the priest spoke. Then he exclaimed :

" But all these young scoundrels will run away from you. "

" Leave that to me, " said Don Bosco — and Rattazzi looked at him for some seconds ; then with the courage that only a great man can shew, he said :

" Very well, have it your own way. "

Don Bosco went to the prison to arrange matters. On the evening before the event, he had the three hundred gathered together, and announced amid acclamations of joy what was going to be done on the morrow. " Remember, " he said, " I have pledged my word. Can I rely upon you ? Tomorrow all Turin will b

looking at you, and if you do not behave yourselves properly, I shall catch it, and so will you; but remember, especially, that you have just made a promise to God to conduct yourselves properly in the future, and to-morrow we shall see if you meant what you said." The young men unanimously promised. It was even necessary to restrain the eagerness of some who threatened to deal roughly with anyone who broke his promise.

The walk was a memorable event. No one would have believed that they were young criminals. Don Bosco was in sole charge, and when he seemed a little fatigued, they took the provisions off the mule and made Don Bosco ride, while they held the reins and walked along beside him. At Stupinigi, the destination, Don Bosco said Mass, then gave them refreshments and dinner, and they amused themselves the whole day. Their conduct was perfect; no quarrels or disorders of any kind. Don Bosco had not even to reprove one of them, and in the evening all returned to the prison.

In the meantime Rattazzi was not at all at his ease. Although he had confidence in Don Bosco, he began to doubt whether he had not overstepped the limits. But presently Don Bosco came himself to give him an account, and the Minister's relief was evident. He thanked him and returned to the former conversation about the State not being able to secure such results.

"Sir," replied Don Bosco, "the force we have is a moral force. While the State can only command and punish, we appeal to the heart, and our teaching is that of Jesus Christ."

He gave almost the same reply to Signor Crispi in 1877, when he was minister of the Interior. He had submitted to Don Bosco some regulations for the Reformatory Schools of the State.

"These are all excellent," said Don Bosco; "but there is one thing wanting and it is essential."

And when Signor Crispi asked to what he referred, he replied:

"The Sacraments, and the practices of Religion;" and Crispi gave more heed to the advice than one might suspect.

More than this, Signor Rattazzi had a distant relative — a young man of wayward and disorderly conduct; and instead of sending him to the Reformatory, and waiting while the suggestions referred to were being adopted, he took him to Don Bosco, who soon made of him a fine young man, and a credit to his position.

In fact Don Bosco suggested to the authorities that they should not hastily send boys to these houses of correction, but should confide them to his care.

The appreciation given to Don Bosco's method may be judged from the statements of men who would be the last to have any partiality towards him, on the score of religion. Signor Ellero, the Deputy, wrote :

"Few things that I have read have so profoundly impressed me as the writings of Don Bosco on the subject of the education of wayward characters. And their value is enhanced by the fact that they are the work not of a dreamer of ideals, but of an idealist imbued with active positivism, the creator of a great work which few know in its full significance, and on account of which, Cesare Lombroso did not hesitate to assign to Don Bosco one of the very highest places, among the few, who have initiated and successfully developed a rational system of educational reform.....

"One cannot help being struck by the prodigies worked by him upon thousands of boys, with only a very minimum of rules, but with an abundant supply of prudent charity, intuitive tact, and psychological perception; while uniform and regular, his work was varied, complex, rich in suggestion for emergencies, and adaptable to the varieties in character of the numbers affected by it..... "

Another well known educationalist, Forster, shows the superiority of Don Bosco's methods, and while contrasting them favourably with others, he remarks that the conscience cannot be formed without religion. Other methods have always a weak spot, and it is the superficiality of their fundamental principles. They affirm indeed that scholastic discipline should harmonise with the demands of our industrial democracy, but ignore the fact that the demands of a determinate form of society cannot be taken as the supreme rule for moral teaching, and that education should be directed towards ideals, which, being beyond and above the unstable demands of the times, may stand for ever, and will elevate and strengthen the spiritual in men, and maintain harmony among them.....

We may say, in truth, the method of Don Bosco produces the perfect scholar, because it compels the formation of the perfect educator. The repressive system is a confession that the master cannot exert a direct influence over the pupil, and must therefore have recourse to something exterior to both minds — punishment. The use of this expedient, which is simple and convenient, releases the master from exerting himself to acquire the power of exercising a personal influence, and to be able to renounce the use of every mechanical means of exerting pressure.

But exactly because anyone is able to use force, and because interest and moral influence are necessary for him who uses the preventive system, it would be interpreting the system mistakenly to forget that his method tends to form both elements of the school — the master and the pupil. It is a delusion to imagine that the pupil can profit by the method under any sort of master. The reformatory boys did not maintain their excellent conduct in the walk simply because they had no soldiers behind them, but because they were influenced by the industrious and eager charity of a Don Bosco.

In one word to prevent, according to him, is not merely the absence of repression. It is the actual training and formation of the character of the educator, so that he acquires the power of obtaining by charity an influence, more ready, more lasting and more intimate than punishment would ever effect.

This is why Don Bosco's method is by no means to be confounded with that feeble indulgence, which tolerates anything rather than have the trouble or pain of punishing; but it is that strong charity which arms itself with all the means to influence for good the minds of the young, and thus acquires the right to abandon the troublesome dislike of punishment, in as much as the mind of the educator has already undergone the solicitude of becoming a vigilant, zealous, patient, devoted and religious guide. In this lies the secret of Don Bosco's successes and the superiority of his methods.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### FROM THE HOME TO THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS.

**D**ON BOSCO desired that the boys should be not only attached to him, but united among themselves. To promote this end, he established among them a sort of Confraternity or Company of St. Aloysius, in which the members should emulate and encourage each other in the practices of piety and the frequentation of the Sacraments. It was approved and blessed on May 21st, 1847, by Archbishop Frasoni, who shortly afterwards came to the Oratory to perform a religious function in the lowly chapel. The Archbishop was tall, and the sanctuary was not high enough to allow him to wear his mitre, while he was standing on the steps of the improvised throne. But he did not remember this, and when he stood up to speak, the mitre knocked against the roof. But he only smiled, and removing it, said: "One must be respectful in the presence of these boys, and speak to them with uncovered head." He never forgot this incident, and when in later years he was in exile at Lyons, and Don Bosco wrote to inform him that he wished to build a new chapel, he bade him remember the mitre and not to make the roof too low.

The Company of St. Aloysius had an annual festival on the titular feast, and Don Bosco added solemnity to it by inviting Bishops and clergy and other distinguished persons. In the procession of 1848, one of those who took part was the famous Count Camillus Cavour, then a prominent deputy. The next development was the establishment of a society of mutual succour, so that the boys should assist each other, not only spiritually but materially, and would not be tempted to join other associations. It was estab-

lished among the older lads, who had a committee of their own, which fixed the rules and the conditions of drawing the benefits. But it was not merely a movement to promote economy; it was suggested by a social policy. Don Bosco was among the few who saw from the very beginning, and often declared his opinion, that the revolutionary movement was not a temporary one; for not all the promises made to the people were made in bad faith, and many of them were in accordance with the general aspirations of the masses towards justice and freedom. On the other hand, he saw that the capitalists were beginning to gain control of the wealth, and were imposing their own conditions upon labour, making unjust contracts concerning wages, hours, and Sundays. Hence he foresaw for the workers a loss of faith, poverty, and the spirit of discontent, and urged the clergy to keep in touch with the people and become their guides. Don Bosco's Society of Mutual Succour did not realise all that the times demanded, but he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had given the impulse and the model for many other associations for Catholic workmen which came afterwards, beginning in 1841, when there was founded at Turin the first of the Catholic Workmen's Unions.

In his regulations for the Oratory, Don Bosco prescribed: "The assistants should see that the boys are never idle, not even in time of recreation. They should have full liberty to run about and play to their heart's content. Gymnastics, music and walks are among the best aids to discipline, and conduce both to health and morality."

It was to satisfy the desire of the young for amusements, and his own desire to amuse them, that he trained them to recite, and to act simple plays. But at this time their minds were full of the news of the war of independence. He had given his blessing to those of the boys who were of age to join the army, and with maps

and pins illustrated the movements of the combatants. He had sham fights and in various ways sought to occupy the growing military ardour. Music now began to be regularly taught, and the Plain Chant was sung with all correctness at the public services. "Thus," he said, "the people will find in the Church that attraction which the ancient Fathers spoke of, particularly St. Augustine." Years after, it was his delight to listen to a Gregorian Mass in the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians, sung by all the boys, that is by about a thousand voices in two choirs. It seemed to him the *ne plus ultra* of the sublime.

The Home that he had founded almost casually and without any preformed design began now to occupy his thoughts more and more, particularly as the number of orphans and homeless was being rapidly increased by the war. His thoughts were centred upon these, notwithstanding the fact that his Oratory at Valdocco was attended by some six hundred boys, and the two others in Turin had another thousand between them. Means however were sadly wanting, and the life at the Oratory remained extremely poor. Don Bosco rejoiced in this, and his mother set her face steadily against any alteration of their state. "Do not seek after any show or splendour in your works," she said to her son. "Seek the glory of God, but keep poverty as its source. Do not have with you those who admire poverty in others but not in themselves. The most efficacious teaching is to do that which we should like to see others doing."

Mamma Margaret was taken ill with pneumonia in November 1856. She received the last Sacraments from her son, and desired him to say the words distinctly so that she might follow them. When the end was near, she would not have him stay in the room, for it made her suffer more to see him suffer, but desired him to go and pray for her. It was Joseph who brought the news of the end to his brother at 3 a. m. on November 25th,

and both were deeply grieved. To the end of his life, Don Bosco often spoke of his mother to those around him, whether they had known her or not. He did not do so in order to make out that she was anyone important, but to show her prudence, piety and charity, and how much his work owed to her. This filial love of his was in no way lessened by his great charity towards the multitude of his boys, and besides giving them an example of filial devotion and obedience, it throws into prominence another rare gift that he possessed, that of charity towards all and yet of maintaining it towards individuals; for, generally speaking, those who embrace many in their regard have little devotion to the few, and those who are devoted to individuals have no love for the world at large.

This special side of Don Bosco's temperament is well shown in regard to certain of his boys, and particularly the one who died on March 9th, 1857. Long remembered and lamented, the model of all the boys was Dominic Savio. He died at the early age of fifteen, but had been already a regular apostle among his companions, eager to undergo anything for their sake. Don Bosco declared it to be his firm belief that the boy's virtue had not only taken him to heaven, but made him a powerful advocate of extraordinary favours. When he published his life in 1859, Don Bosco wrote: "Some of you will ask me why I have written about Dominic Savio, and not about so many other boys you have known, and who were conspicuous for their virtue. It is true that Divine Providence has sent us many shining examples of sanctity, but their doings were not so remarkable as those of Savio, whose life as a whole was well known to be extraordinary. However, later on, if God gives me health and grace, I shall write something for you about those others, so as to satisfy your desires and my own, and so that you may imitate these youths, as far as your circumstances permit."

Then he adds : " When Savio died I invited all his companions of the three years he spent at the Oratory to tell me of any defect they had noticed in his conduct, or any virtue that he had not practised, but all were agreed that they could not discover one. "

It seemed providential that at the time when Don Bosco was completing his system of education, there should live by his side that youth, who represented the perfect type much desired by him, as the fruit of his endeavours. For he could thus point out for his own assurance and for the instruction of others, a living example of what could be effected by the educational directions suggested to him by God.

When Don Bosco was able to build proper premises, he began to think out a scheme for keeping the boys with him all day, instead of only the few hours that remained from their school or work. This arrangement began with the scholastic year 1854-55, and he had the regulations read in full once a year, and some point of them every Sunday. One noteworthy passage is the article which says :

" Every night after the prayers, the Director, or someone in his stead, shall give a little discourse of a few minutes, dealing with some recommendation or regulation to which it is desired to call attention; an illustration should be drawn from some incident which has happened in the school or outside, but the discourse should not exceed five minutes. This little admonition, if skilfully put, may be made one of the chief aids to morality and to a successful education. "

Perhaps he adopted this suggestion from the celebrated work of Mgr. Dupanloup on the education given in seminaries; or he may have remembered that, on that far-off evening in May 1847, when he took in his first boy, Mamma Margaret had given the lad some good advice on the necessity of religion and labour, before

she sent him to bed. Certain it is that Don Bosco always attached great importance to the nightly discourse, and it has remained a fixed and important rule in the Salesian Houses. Don Bosco did not often hand this duty over to others, for he esteemed it his own work; but if he were prevented he would send another saying: "Just a few words, one idea that will make its impression, so that the boys will go to bed, having well grasped the truth explained to them."

After the night prayers he would often speak a word or two to individual boys whom he knew required some special advice or comfort, and this was regarded as a great privilege. One of his other important recommendations was that, which urged that the boys be kept constantly engaged, in whatever part of the day's programme they were. Good manners were also taught by having some special point read out once a week, and every circumstance of life was touched upon. Don Bosco himself sometimes gave this lesson, and he was in every way an example in good manners. He used to repeat St. Paul's maxim: "*Cui honor, honor.*" A maxim on which he always acted towards everyone. There was no point in this matter which he thought too trifling to be observed, particularly in regard to the amenities of conversation. He had consummate tact in the correction of slips or mistakes. If a grammatical error was made, he would contrive to bring the phrase or word into his conversation, so that the speaker would be able to take the hint without feeling himself corrected. As an example the following incident may be quoted. He had made certain proposals to some of the more advanced clerics in regard to a task to be undertaken, and one of them replied without consideration that the idea was "superlatively inopportune and bristling with insuperable difficulties." Don Bosco gently asked of those listening: "What is hyperbole?" and all laughed, and the "insuperable difficulties" were no longer thought of.

Even details of dress were not beneath his notice, and any carelessness in appearance would be sure to call forth some apposite remark. In fact he attached such importance to the rules of politeness and to their inculcation upon the young, that he wrote an amusing play in three acts, introducing the faults against good manners.

Don Bosco had already had occasion to notice that his care and teaching were often lost, on account of the boys going out daily into the workshops of the town to learn their trades. Accordingly in 1853 he opened his first workshop, that of the boot-makers. It was quite a small affair and ill-equipped, but it was the lowly beginning of his celebrated schools of arts and trades. A shop for tailors and one for book-binders were soon added, and the beginning of his "Catholic Readings" gave him the occasion for opening his first printing department. In regard to this he remarked in his memoirs that the constant backwardness of the printing of the *Readings* made him determine to have a printing-press at the Oratory. The various articles were soon provided, and the material for a year's printing was laid up, so that several boys were put into this new department. It began most simply, but it developed more rapidly than any other into the great printing establishment, whose samples of work were awarded prizes at all the principal Exhibitions.

In 1862 the iron-workers' section was opened, and then a complete system of regulations was drawn up combining the management and instruction of these trade departments. Considerable organising skill was necessary to cope with all the requirements, but Don Bosco was a past-master in this, and his programmes of instruction, and his co-ordinating of class and practical work were successful in a remarkable degree. The theoretical side was well developed, and his higher classes were instructed in all the subjects

bearing on their trade, as well as in political economy and sociology. Instrumental music was taught to perfection, and was rightly regarded as a powerful means to provide the refining influences, necessary to complete a skilled artisan's mental equipment. Regular examinations both in theory and practice were established long before such tests were required by official regulations; good sense and justice had suggested them in Don Bosco's methods. The schools were places of instruction and not sources of profit, but they were so organised that their productions maintained the boys and provided a certain sum to be at their disposal at the end of their course. As a conclusion to this section on the Trade Schools we may cite the opinion recorded in a paper, the *Stampa*, which will not be suspected of partiality. On the occasion of the Exhibition of work performed in these schools, it said :

"The object of the professional schools is of a simplicity which throws them into contrast with older systems; it is to give to the artisan a perfect knowledge of his trade, gained through a carefully graded progressive course. It adapts the sections to the boy's capacity, so that he assimilates the necessary knowledge and is experienced in all departments of his art. He cannot pass to the higher departments and the finer work until he has obtained a diploma in the lower ones, so that at the completion of his course there can be no doubt about his capabilities.

"The efficacy of the educational system in these schools is perhaps best demonstrated in the agricultural section. The results are without exception admirable, and are a clear proof of the agricultural capabilities of the country, were modern principles more widely adopted."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE COLLEGE AND CHURCH.

THE Schools of Arts and Trades completed Don Bosco's design for the Christian and social training of the young artisan. The existing conditions exposed this class of youth to neglect, to the lack of education on sane principles, and to influences which were always a menace; and on the other hand, as the conditions demanded far greater skill than formerly, these schools sent the boys forth fully equipped for the struggle, and able to contribute their quota to the development of industrial life, which constitutes both the fortune and the peril of our times.

But Don Bosco came into contact with another class of boys, for whom he considered that there was no adequate provision, — that of the middle and trading classes; he lamented that there were no educational institutes to develop their capabilities. It had happened that Religious Orders, which had been founded for the education of the poor or the middle classes, had gradually been forced by necessity to devote their attention to the well-to-do, and had made them the principal object of their work. Don Bosco therefore began to consider how he might open schools for the middle classes and to apply to them, with suitable modifications, the methods of procedure which had proved so fruitful at the Oratory.

The occasion was provided by urgent requests from Monferrato, and the place chosen was Mirabello in the Diocese of Casale. A new building was begun in 1862 and completed in 1863. It had necessarily implied a heavy outlay, the cost being borne principally by the Provera family and by the Countess Callori di Vignale. The young cleric Provera asked Don Bosco if he had some experienced

priest in mind, not belonging to the Oratory, who possessed the necessary qualities to direct the new work. Don Bosco said he was going to rely entirely on his own pupils, and he named as Director, Don Michael Rua, who had been ordained three years; as Prefect, the cleric Provera, above-mentioned; as Catechist the cleric John Bonetti; and as Prefect of Studies another cleric Francis Cerruti. It was rather a bold step to entrust youths to such youthful masters. He wrote to Don Rua :

" As Divine Providence has given us the opportunity of opening a House for the promotion of the welfare of youth at Mirabello, I think it is for the greater glory of God that I should entrust its direction to you. But since I shall not be at hand to point out to you the various methods of procedure which you have already seen in practice, I thought you would be glad to have a few directions for your future guidance. I give you these as coming from a father who opens his heart to one of the dearest of his sons, and they will be a pledge of the love I bear you, and a manifestation of my desire that you should gain many souls to God. "

He provided for the greatest freedom in the reception of the Sacraments, and counselled the frequent invitation of outside confessors for the confessions of the pupils. The greatest endeavours were to be exerted for the maintenance of charity, and, when spiritual or moral advantages were in question, that decision should be adopted which best promoted the glory of God and the good of souls. Pretensions or self-love of any kind should be sacrificed.

" Do not consider anything so important as to lose your peace of mind, " he said, and again : " Avoid any particular mortification in food, and take at least six hours of repose every night. This is necessary to maintain the welfare of both body and soul. "

Some of his ideas as to the matter and manner of instruction, of his spirit of sincerity and simplicity are left on record in some

of his instructions preserved by Don Cerruti. Don Bosco, describing some of the faults of the schools wrote :

"Theses and dissertations, imaginary discussions and amplifications and the like, these seem to be the only aim; no idea of a letter, a dialogue, or a simple description of an event in real life, or some theme which would promote charity..... Would that this mistaken plan had not been so widely adopted; we should not have seen during so many generations young boys assuming a philosophical gravity, writing about laws and methods of government, of truces and propositions of peace, things of which they have never heard, and cannot grasp; or in their recitations, they are transformed into Hannibals and Scipios, or are dressed in the toga to harangue the army or the plebs, with a set of stolen ideas; while in most cases they cannot take a simple part on the stage, or write a letter in a direct natural style, or an application for a position, describe some fact from memory, or narrate some actual occurrence."

But in order that disciplinary or scholastic rules should not be fixed and immutable, and thus lose the improvement suggested by experience, he gave another important and useful hint which he himself always practised. He had a book which received the title : *Experiences*. In it he recorded all the disorders, undesirable occurrences and mistakes which happened during the course of the school-year, whether in the relations between boys and superiors, or between superiors and their subordinates, or among superiors themselves : events concerning the parents, or ecclesiastical and civil authorities. Remarks were added concerning the remedies adopted and the reasons for changes in the time-table, holidays and such matters, so that in every circumstance the best methods and suggestions might be followed.

This College of Mirabello, which in 1870 was transferred for greater convenience to Borgo San Martino, was the prototype of

the many colleges on similar lines opened by him or his sons, and which gradually assumed a place in his work and in his solicitude not less important than his schools of arts and trades.

However, the very confidence which arose out of the evident assistance of God, and the many obstacles overcome, and gave him every prospect of the security and growth of his work, made him covet a sort of sacred capital for his Kingdom, where piety, the queen of that Kingdom, might have its consecrated throne; where the schools and the people might be joined in a living unity in the service of God; where his message and that of his priests might have an auditorium so vast as to be restricted only by the confines of the entire world, to which his gaze was now lifted. In one word, he looked forward to building a great Sanctuary.

One evening, towards the end of 1862, he said to some of his chief followers :

"To-day I have been hearing confessions for a long time, but I hardly knew what I said or did, for there was one idea which distracted me so powerfully as to take me almost out of myself. I kept on thinking over the small size of our Church and how the boys are almost on top of each other. Why not build another, larger and grander? Its title shall be : 'The Church of Our Lady Help of Christians.' I haven't a halfpenny, nor do I know where to get the money, but that does not matter; if God wills it, it shall be done. I shall make the attempt, and if it fails, the shame will be wholly mine. They may then say : 'Coepit aedificare et non potuit consummare.' " (1)

On January 31st, 1863, as he was again speaking of the Church which he intended to build, someone said to him : "To build a Church without any means, in an age so covetous and so self-interested! That would be tempting Providence."

(1) This man began to build and was not able to finish (St. Luke 14. 30).

Don Bosco replied: "When we are about to do anything, we should consider first of it is for the greater glory of God; if it is known to be so, let us go ahead and not hesitate, and success will follow."

In February 1863, he began definitely to make the preliminary arrangements. Although he had not yet acquired the site, he sent out a great number of circulars asking the co-operation of his benefactors, beginning with the civil authorities.

He bought the site in Valdocco on February 11th, and sent at once for the distinguished architect Signor Antonio Spezia, telling him to draw up designs for a Church of vast proportions. As soon as the plans were ready, he wrote on the front the title: "Church of Our Lady Help of Christians," and sent them to the Municipal authority for approval. One of the architects on the Committee noticed the dedication and said it was unpopular, inopportune, and savoured of bigotry.

To this Don Bosco replied: "It is very possible that in the midst of your many occupations you have had no time to inquire into the origin of the title. But you must surely remember the victory obtained over the Turks at Lepanto, and the liberation of Vienna, in which Prince Eugene of Savoy displayed such valour."

"That may be so, but we have decided that it is unsuitable to the times."

After some weeks, when the plans had been completed by the architect in accordance with the suggestions made, they were sent again to the Municipality. The proposed title was not inserted, and the plans were passed in the customary manner as those of a new Church. The committee rather admired its style and proportions, and one of them said: "But this will cost you thousands, and how are you going to do it without any funds?" Don Bosco gave the committee to understand that the means would be forthcoming, and they then enquired again as to the title.

" Oh, I shall find a title, I am still considering it. The committee is only concerned with sanctioning a given building for a given site. "

The written permission was sent to the Oratory, and Don Bosco went to the Municipality to thank the chief architect. The latter said he supposed the title was changed. Don Bosco answered :

" When I saw that the title displeased you, I omitted it, so that I am still at liberty to select the one that seems best. "

" Then you have been deceiving me. "

" There is no deceit about it. There was a title you didn't like and you didn't approve it; I wanted to give it and I am going to do so. Thus we shall both be satisfied, for we shall both have our own way. "

Don Bosco then spoke to the economer of the Oratory and told him to have the work begun as soon as possible. To this the economer demurred, urging the immense cost, while there was no money for the necessaries of the house. Don Bosco replied : " Never mind, have the excavations begun; when did we ever begin anything with the money ready beforehand? We must leave something for Providence to do. "

The funds began to come in by degrees. There were offerings from His Holiness Pius IX. and from the Royal Household, but the large contribution promised by the Municipality was subsequently cancelled, on the ground that only parish churches could be supported by them. The site itself absorbed all the early contributions. By April 1864 the excavations were finished and fenced in, and all was ready for the foundations of the walls. Don Bosco therefore laid the first stone, reserving for a later ceremony the laying of the corner stone. It was hardly over when Don Bosco turned to the Contractor and said : " I want to give you something on account. I don't know that it will be much, but it will be all that I have. " Then he opened his purse and emptied it into the Contractor's hand, who stood expecting it to be filled with money.

But only a few pence were forthcoming. Then Don Bosco smiled and said : " Never mind ; Our Lady will look after her own church. I shall only be the cashier. " And to those listening he said as he turned away : " You will see ! "

The corner stone was laid just a year later, in April 1865. His Royal Highness Prince Amadeus placed it in position, when it had been blessed by Mgr. Odone, Bishop of Susa. The money came from all parts of the world to the amount of over 40,000 pounds. The accounts of the money show that almost all of it was sent in thanksgiving for favours obtained through the intercession of Our Lady Help of Christians, so that even before the Church became the famous sanctuary for prayer to her, it was itself a testimony to her power and glory.

In 1868 the church was consecrated with an eight days solemn celebration, and this was the first of the many churches, some of them of vast proportions and great magnificence, which Don Bosco or his sons have erected in every part of the globe. It may be said that after the laying of the foundation-stone of the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians, the work of Don Bosco was complete in all its main features, for the formation of the Salesian Society, the Missions, the Association of Co-operators and the great undertakings that followed formed the consolidation and expansion of the work. In the succeeding years Don Bosco will make frequent journeys throughout Italy ; in 1875, 1877, 1880 and 1883 he will be in France ; in 1883 in Austria also, and 1886 in Spain ; in all these places he will be the subject of enthusiastic welcomes, he will found Houses and Schools, perform many good offices for the State, and his influence will spread throughout the world. But the character of his endeavours for the promotion of Religion and on behalf of youths, the type of his Oratories, Homes, Schools, Colleges, and Professional Schools was already definitely fixed.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SALESIAN SOCIETY AND THE DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS.

**I**N the spring of 1855 the Cavour-Rattazzi Ministry brought in a motion for the suppression of the majority of the Religious Congregations in the Sardinian States. The reasons adduced by the Government, and dilated upon by the members supporting it, were of every variation, but the idea on which they were all based, and which, though sometimes not expressed, permeated all the arguments, was that the age of the Religious Orders was gone; that they depended on the incomes of patrimonies which still lived about institutions that had died; that at any rate, if these institutions had never existed, and there was now a proposal to create them, it would not commend itself to any man, no matter how religious he might be. In their wisdom, the idea of annulling one's personality for the benefit of a collective body was far too repugnant to modern ideas. Therefore the supporters of the motion brought forward in excuse the saying that was used against Maramaldo as a term of infamy: "You are killing a dead man."

It was precisely in that same spring, on March 25th, that Don Bosco called one of his clerics, Michael Rua, to his room and asked if he felt disposed to make for the term of a year the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; in other words the vows on which religious orders depend for their existence and their strength. Don Bosco volunteered no explanation as to the object of the contract which the young man made. The three virtues were important enough to be their own recommendation, and

besides, the man who proposed the profession of the vows inspired confidence enough for any sacrifice. Moreover the co-operation and constancy of the young cleric were better secured, and these motives were quite adequate for the step taken. There were no witnesses to it; the two knelt down before a crucifix, and then the first seed was cast that was to grow into an immense tree. The same moment when there was a public outburst against undertakings of this nature was the very time he chose for this special act of confidence in God, in his own vocation, in the young man whom he had invited to participate in the ceremony, and who was destined to be one day his successor. Was it meant to be a challenge? No: Just as the Government was ignorant of the propositions made at Valdocco, so Valdocco and the Oratory seemed to forget for a moment the powerful and hostile Chamber. Don Bosco was evidently not aiming at the Government — for his reply was a secret one — but it seemed to be a further compact with himself, placing the corner stone of an edifice which he was thus bound to complete, and in a manner to constrain Almighty God to grant him the means of bringing to a successful termination the work begun in His name.

In fact at this date he had not definitely fixed the character of the Society of which he had enrolled the first member, but he had for some time conceived the idea of founding it. At the period of his work when many thought him to be mad, it was partly his reference to such a plan that helped to give rise to the idea. For a good while he had invited his most advanced boys and especially the clerics to stay at the Oratory to help him in his work; but meeting with small success and complaining of it to Don Savio in 1850, the latter said: "You should found a religious order." Having discussed the difficulty with Don Cafasso, the priest said: "For works such as yours a religious Congregation is indispensable."

"That has been my idea, but how can I prevent it from being dispersed when the difficulties arise?"

"That can be soon remedied," replied Don Cafasso; "Let the Society have the obligation of the vows, and the approbation of the supreme authority of the Church. Then it can count upon being permanent, and upon the maintenance of discipline among its members."

Thus by degrees Don Bosco was preparing the groundwork, partly at the suggestion of others, partly guided by his own ideas. On Sunday evenings he used to gather together some of the chief clerics, and the students who were preparing for the ecclesiastical state, and gradually accustom them to the idea of living a community life; he got them to pass the vacations, or part of them at the Oratory, shared with them his vast designs for the welfare of the young, so that they began to accustom themselves to the idea that the Oratory was confided to their care, and that its destiny was to be their future work. It was an Association that was gradually taking shape in their minds almost unconsciously, but only as a gathering of sons around their father, to help him in the successful direction of the Oratory. The times were too disturbed, and the future too uncertain, for even the boldest not to be daunted by the explicit announcement of the desire to found a religious Congregation. Don Bosco must have known Michael Rua very thoroughly to make an exception of him, and not to fear any opposition or inconstancy on his part; to go so far as to have him associated with himself by vow, without knowing what end he was to serve in the master's plan. And indeed Don Bosco knew his assistant well.

In 1845, he had gone very often to the college of St. Barbara conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. A little boy, then eight years old, had been strongly attracted to the priest, whose very arrival was enough to put all the students into com-

notion, who gathered round him to listen to his kindly words, and who deserted all other confessionals to go to his.

One day in that year young Rua went with a companion to the Oratory, and spent much time there in the following years. In September 1850 he joined in the retreat given by Don Bosco at Giaveno. After that he used to go to the Oratory on week-days as well as Sundays, and having completed his studies at St. Barbara's, Don Bosco advised him to study Latin, and found a master for him. He made rapid progress and when Don Bosco heard of his successful examinations he said: "I have designs on young Rua; he will be of great assistance to me when the time comes."

Michael Rua received the clerical habit on October 3rd 1852 at Becchi, and when they sat down afterwards with the Rector of the place, the latter said to Don Bosco: "Do you remember when you were a cleric you said: 'I shall have priests, and clerics, and young students and artisans and a church etc.?' and how I answered that you were mad. Now it seems you knew what you were talking about."

It is believed that on that occasion Don Bosco said for the first time what he afterwards often repeated: "If God had said to me: 'Imagine a boy adorned with all the ability and virtue you would like, ask Me for him, and I will give him to you', I would not have imagined such a rare combination as that possessed by Michael Rua."

In the two following years, from 1855 to 1857, Don Bosco turned his attention more and more to the form which the new Society should assume, and his difficulties were lessened since there were eight clerics among his young assistants, upon whom he felt he could count with all confidence. Those who filled the chief positions in his Sunday Oratories and in the growing school at Valdocco would form the nucleus of the future Superior Chapter,

and there was already a combination of regulations and rule directing the work of those who would form a permanent council. With these as a working basis he constructed the fabric of the Constitutions which should rule the future Congregation. In his judgment it would not undertake practices of the ascetic character associated with other Orders, but would be built principally on the model of the secular clergy. As he himself put it:

"It will preserve the substance of the Religious Orders — the outward appearance is not necessary. In fact I am of opinion that a society in its simplest form would inspire greater confidence and sympathy, and would in time attract a great many subjects through what I may call its up-to-date character.

He made known his designs to a number of highly-placed ecclesiastics who were favourable to his work, but they immediately pointed out a serious difficulty. Would not the Government, which had displayed such antipathy to religious bodies, stifle in its birth any new movement in that direction? Although Don Bosco had the greatest confidence in God, he found it difficult to withstand the anxiety arising from such a well-founded objection. He was freed from it by assistance from a quite unexpected quarter.

He had occasion to confer with Signor Rattazzi, then the Minister of the Interior, who, as we have already seen, was exceptionally well-disposed towards the Oratory. During the course of their conversation, the Minister himself brought forward the subject that lay nearest to Don Bosco's heart.

"I hope," he said, "that you have yet many more years to live for the benefit of youth, but you are mortal like all of us, and if you were called away, what would become of your work? Have you considered that eventuality? And if you have, what do you propose to do to secure the continuance of your Institute?"

As may be imagined this welcome inquiry was quite unexpected, and Don Bosco replied half seriously, half jokingly:

"To tell you the truth, I hadn't thought of dying just yet; have secured some assistants for the time being, but I have not quite settled on the means to make the work permanent. However, as you have broached the topic, would you favour me with your opinion as to the means I ought to take?"

"In my view," replied Rattazzi, "since it is not a question of having the Oratory recognised as a religious work (Count Cavour had already suggested this view to Don Bosco) you ought to select some of the ecclesiastics and others who are in your confidence, form them into a society under rules, imbue them with your spirit and teach them your methods, so that they shall be not only assistants, but the means of continuing your work."

At this suggestion Don Bosco smiled. Signor Rattazzi had been a member of the Administration which had passed a law for the suppression of the religious congregations, existing for centuries in the Sardinian States. It seemed somewhat strange therefore to hear the same man advising the institution of another. He replied:

"And does your Excellency think it would be possible to found a Society of that kind in our days? Or that it could possibly endure without there being some religious bond among the members?"

"Some bond is necessary, I agree, but it should be of such a kind that property does not belong to the Community as to a moral being, possessing it as a whole."

"Only two or three years ago the Government suppressed religious orders of much the same kind as you suggest, and perhaps contemplates the suppression of others, and would it allow the foundation of another very like them?"

"I am perfectly aware of the law of suppression, and of its scope. It would cause no difficulty whatever, for you have in contemplation a society framed according to the demands of the

present times, and in keeping with the legislation now in force your society would have none of the ancient mortmain; each member would have all his civil rights, would be subject to the laws of the State, would pay taxes and the like. In short, from our point of view the new Society would be an association of free citizens, who are living in union to carry out a beneficent work.

"But will your Excellency give me an assurance that the Government will allow the institution and existence of such Society?"

"No government, that pretends to be constitutional and regular would prevent the establishment and development of such a society just as it places no hindrance in the way of commercial or industrial societies or those for mutual benefit and such like. Any association of free citizens is permissible, as long as its scope and acts are not contrary to the laws and the institutions of the State. You may be quite reassured on that point. You will have the support of the Government and of the King, for yours is a work that is eminently beneficial to society."

"Very well, your Excellency, I will think the matter over and as you show such favourable dispositions towards my work I shall not hesitate to have recourse to your prudence and authority."

On several other occasions Rattazzi received Don Bosco at the Ministry and continued his support to the design which he thought was entirely his own. Don Bosco said to some of his subjects on January 1st 1876: "Rattazzi willingly pointed out how various articles of our Rules should be formulated so as to be in keeping with the laws. In fact it may be said that certain precautionary measures to keep us from being molested by the civil power came entirely from him."

Being now sure that obstacles would not come from the Government, Don Bosco conferred at length with Don Cafasso, and

hen proposed the following question to several Bishops and theologians :

“ Could not a Society, whose aim is to work for the glory of God and which, in the eyes of the Government is only a civil society, assume at the same time the nature of a religious Institute before God and the Church? Could not its members be free citizens and religious at the same time? It appears to me that they could; just as in every state a Catholic is subject to the King or to the Republic and also subject to the Church, faithful to both, observing the laws of both. ”

The replies to this question were favourable. But it was important to Don Bosco to have the consent of the Archbishop as well, and Mgr. Frasoni was now in exile at Lyons. A letter to him received in answer an entire approval, and advised him to lay the plan before the Pope, for whom the Archbishop enclosed a letter of recommendation. It was on this advice that Don Bosco made his first visit to Rome, accompanied by the young cleric Michael Rua, and was received in audience in February 1858.

Don Bosco had not yet spoken of his design, when the Holy Father referred to it in almost the same terms, strangely enough, as the Minister Rattazzi.

“ You have expended a great deal of effort, but if you happened to die what would become of your work? ” Don Bosco needed no other opening. He presented the Archbishop's letter and said : “ I beg Your Holiness to give me the basis of an Institution which shall be compatible with the times and the country in which we live. ”

Pius IX. replied : “ I see that we are in agreement. You must establish a Society which will be acceptable to the Government. At the same time you must not remain content with binding the members only by promises, for in that case you will not have the necessary bonds between the associates themselves, and between

superiors and inferiors; you would not be sure of your subjects nor could you rely for any length of time upon their constancy. Try to adapt your rules to these principles, and when they are complete they will be examined. Your task is not such an easy one. You are proposing to live in the world, without having any part in it. However, if it is the Will of God, He will enlighten you. Ask for further guidance. Come to me again after a few days, and I will tell you what I have decided about it."

In the second audience the Pope said:

"The vows should be the simple vows, so that they can be dispensed if necessary and so that you need not keep those whose dispositions would disturb the peace and union of the others. The manner of dress and the practices of piety should be such as not to make them conspicuous, and for this reason, too, it would be better to call the institute a Society and not a Congregation."

Then he referred to certain societies which were constructed somewhat on these lines and whose constitutions Don Bosco had already consulted. For the matter of the vows he held principally to the constitutions of the Redemptorists, and for the formula to that of the Jesuits. Don Bosco told the Holy Father this, and gave him the manuscript of the constitutions, altered here and there after the first audience, asking him to change and complete them according as he should deem necessary.

In a third audience the Holy Father returned the manuscript to Don Bosco, who saw at once that it had been annotated by the Pope himself. The latter told him to give it to Cardinal Gaudea and gave him directions for securing its definite approbation. Don Bosco obtained permission to have the rules adopted temporarily while awaiting their final approbation, and on his return to Turin he enrolled as novices those clerics who showed signs of a vocation to the Society.

On May 14th 1862 Don Bonetti wrote: "This evening the

ceremony of taking the vows was performed for the first time by the members of the newly-formed Society. We were gathered together in a small room, poorly furnished; and upon a table before us, were two candles, between which was a crucifix; it seemed to accept the offering of our heart and the sacrifice of our life. There were twenty-two of us besides Don Bosco. When the vows were made he gave a brief exhortation and spoke words of encouragement. Among other things, he said :

"The vows that you have made will not impose on you any obligation beyond that of observing what you have observed up till now, namely the rules of the House. My dear sons, we live in times that are far from peaceful to the Church, and in such inauspicious moments it would almost seem a presumption to form a new religious community, while the world is taking measures to uproot those that already exist. But do not be misled. I have not only probable reasons, but certain proofs that it is the Will of God that our Society should begin and should develop. Who knows but God wishes to make use of us to accomplish much good in His Church! Twenty-five or thirty years from now, if God continues to aid us, as He has hitherto done, our Society, spread into all parts of the world, will mount up to a thousand members..... "

If Don Bosco had gone forward in his prevision a few more years he could have quadrupled his figures. The thirty-nine in 1863 had become about 4,000 in 1911.

The negotiations at Rome, which Don Bosco wished to push on with all speed, proved however to be a very deliberate process. Cardinal Gaude died in the year of the audience 1858, and left the matter very much where it was before. In 1863 Don Bosco thought of sending to Rome a copy of the Constitutions and beginning the process over again; they had had five years of practice in the actual working of the Oratory, and this should be a recom-

mendation, but the reply from Rome was that it would be necessary to obtain the approval of a certain number of Bishops, and of the diocesan authorities.

The first approbation was given on November 27th, 1863 by the Bishop of Cuneo. It was shortly followed by those of the Bishops of Acqui, Susa, Mondovi and Casale. There remained one to come, the principal one, that of the Vicar Capitular of Turin who was then ruling the Archdiocese after the death of Mgr. Frasoni. He was by no means given to hasty judgments, and meant to examine the affair minutely as he did all others. His approval came at length on February 11th, 1864.

The decision from Rome was now not long in coming. On July 23rd of the same year, 1864, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, with the sanction of the Pope, issued the decree of commendation regarding the existence and spirit of the new Society, nominating Don Bosco the Superior General for life. The formal approbation of the Constitution was deferred to a more suitable date, and in the meantime thirteen observations were made upon the Society of St. Francis of Sales, as it was officially styled. In regard to some of these Don Bosco put forward further requests and they were partly changed; the Society was granted the faculty of releasing from the vows, of granting the dimissorial letters for promotion to Holy Orders, conditional dispensation from asking the permission of the Holy See in regard to sales and loans, and the Bishops were given the right of authorising the foundation of new churches.

The negotiations were long drawn out and at times very thorny, particularly after the death of Archbishop Riccardi, when Mgr. Gastaldi succeeded to the Archiepiscopal See of Turin. The latter had at one time been a staunch friend, a co-worker, a strenuous defender of Don Bosco's work; he had taught sacred eloquence for some time to his clerics and priests, and had furthered their

ecclesiastical training and career in many ways. On the other hand his virtue and great learning had always been held in respect and admiration by Don Bosco and his followers. But when he was promoted to the See of Saluzzo, and afterwards to Turin, he displayed an aversion to the young Society, fearing in particular that by educating young clerics it might lessen the episcopal authority. Although treated coldly and harshly by the Archbishop, even in his personal relations with him, Don Bosco never lost confidence in God, and imposed silence on those among his subjects and friends who were tempted to retaliate.

And he won the victory. Although the opposition continued, the definite approbation of the Society came on April 3rd, 1874, making the concessions for which Don Bosco had appealed. The status of the new Society may be judged from the programme set out for it at the head of the constitutions.

"The object of The Salesian Society is the Christian perfection of its members, the exercise of every work of charity both spiritual and temporal towards young boys, especially the poor, and the education of young clerics. The Society has within it priests, clerics and lay-brothers.

In order to carry out this programme the Salesians shall direct their care :

(a) To Festive Oratories.

(b) To Schools of Arts and Trades for young Artisans, and also to agricultural schools.

(c) To the training of young aspirants to the priesthood.

(d) To religious instruction, by means of missions, sermons and books.

(e) To the promotion of religious associations.

(f) To the establishment of primary schools and of colleges for boarders and day-scholars.

(g) To the education and training of clerics.

(h) To the foreign missions, and in exceptional cases to other works of charity.

"To meet the special needs of youthful aspirants to the priesthood who prefer to enter our Houses, or who for want of means would not be able to pursue their studies elsewhere, schools shall be opened in which the curriculum shall be expressly adapted for the training of vocations to the ecclesiastical state. The same applies to the Houses for tardy vocations, viz., for those aspirants to the religious life and foreign missions, who owing to their more advanced age, would not be able to follow out their vocations in the ordinary seminaries."

This last foundation was planned and realised by Don Bosco in 1876 when he saw that vocations should be fostered not only among his pupils, but among those in other circumstances, especially among those to whom a vocation comes later in life, or is encompassed with various difficulties. He saw that unless special rules and allowances were made for this latter class, they would be long considering their vocation, and seldom find the means for its realisation.

But even with this supplementary work there was still a lacuna to be filled in the totality of the Salesian Institutions. What would he do for the other sex? Was there nothing necessary to be done for them, or by means of them? It was in 1863 that the sister of Don Provera, who was a member of the new society, expressed to Don Bosco her desire of becoming a religious. "If you wait a little," he replied, "I shall have nuns among my assistants, as I already have clerics and priests."

In 1872 Don Bosco's proposition was realised. At the little town of Mornese, some pious young women, with a certain Maria Mazzarello at their head, had formed an association under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception; Don Pestarino was its

director. While making a pilgrimage to Our Lady *delle Rochette*, this priest felt called to dedicate his life and means to the work of Don Bosco, whom he had lately come to know. He entered the society, but Don Bosco wished him to stay at Mornese where he was engaged in many good works, and thus he brought the new spirit to bear upon the young women's association. It began its work soon after in Nizza Monferrato, which became its principal House, and in 1872 took the name of Daughters of Our Lady Help of Christians. As was the case with the Salesians, the Nuns of Our Lady Help of Christians soon spread everywhere and undertook every sort of educational work on behalf of girls, beginning with the Sunday and Festive Oratory, which is attached to everyone of their many Houses. Every good work on behalf of girls is undertaken by them. "Prayer and work" is their rule of life.

"The Daughters of Our Lady Help of Christians" — thus writes a reliable authority — "work with their intellect by applying themselves to serious study, so as to undertake the teaching of primary and secondary schools; they cultivate the higher branches of art and learning so as to meet the demands made by the education of young women; they work with all a woman's love in the homes for infants and for homeless girls; they manage hostels for young women employed in business, clubs and similar works, acting a mother's part towards thousands of girls, and in almost every part of the globe."

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE MISSIONS AND THE CARE OF EMIGRANTS.

THIS chapter may be well introduced by some of Don Bosco's own words: "The Church of Jesus Christ is Catholic or universal, and by its nature tends to expand and spread everywhere by means of its ministers. What would have become of the Pagan world had the Apostles never left the confines of Judea? Although St. Peter and his successors, including the reigning Pontiff Pius IX., always had need of priests at Rome and in Italy, did they not send many as well into Gaul and Spain, to Germany, England, and places far away?"

These words clearly indicate how there was renewed in him the spirit of the Apostles and Popes and of the great founders of Religious Orders, leading him to cast his gaze out upon unknown and uncivilised lands; and this indeed before he had completed his undertakings at home, even withdrawing himself from them, no matter how necessary they might seem. It was like one of those diversions, which in other times and in other fields of action, Cornelius Scipio ventured upon, when Rome was threatened by Hannibal, and Scipio decided to go out to Africa itself to win victories for Rome.

Moreover, Don Bosco had long had the desire to join in the evangelisation of remote countries, but circumstances had caused him to lay aside the idea. Later on, when Don Cafasso advised him to abandon the resolution of joining the Franciscans and to become a secular priest, the difficulty of carrying this out led him to think of joining the foreign missions, particularly as the Society for the Propagation of the Faith was then flourishing in Piedmont, although

it had only lately been founded in Lyons. The letters from the missionaries were eagerly read by him.

Soon after the foundation of the Oratory he said to his boys :

" If you have the opportunity of learning other languages, do not neglect it. Every language learnt is like the cutting down of a barrier between ourselves and millions of our fellow-creatures, and may render us capable of doing good to a great number of them. I have heard many confessions in Latin and French. My knowledge of Greek came to my aid in the Hospital of the Cotto-lengo, where I met a Catholic from the East who wished to go to confession. I would that in our charity we could embrace the whole world to lead it to the Church and to God. "

Don Francesia records the following : " I still remember the impression made on me in my youth, when, going into Don Bosco's room for the first time, I saw on the wall the picture of some saint. On my enquiring what saint it was, he replied : ' It is the Blessed Perboyre, a Martyr for the Faith who died not long ago in China. I wish the sons of our Oratory could go out there ! What a great amount of good they would then do ! If God gave me twelve priests ready to place themselves entirely at my disposal, we should plant our tents in those lands. ' "

In 1854, when the young lad, John Cagliero (now Cardinal Cagliero) was very dangerously ill, Don Bosco bent over his bed and asked him if he wished to go to Heaven or to be cured. The boy replied :

" If you think fit, let me go to Heaven, and as soon as possible. "

But, looking at the boy with an expression of great tenderness, Don Bosco answered :

" No, my dear boy, it is not yet time for you to go ; you shall be cured, and become a priest and a missionary, and go into many distant lands. "

From 1860, he turned his attention to studying the regions in

which idolatry was still practised. Don Lemoyne, his biographer, says : " I myself often heard him exclaim, ' What a grand occasion that will be, when our missionaries go forth to evangelise the vast regions of America and Australia.' " But in the end, the undertaking and the choice of territory for his missions was due to the negotiations of a layman.

" One day in 1875, " says Don Francesia, " Don Bosco had gone to our college at Varazze to visit the Argentine Consul, Commendatore Gazzolo who was living at Verona. This gentleman had spent many years in Buenos Aires, and being in close touch with ecclesiastical matters, he had suggested to Mgr. Aneyros, the Archbishop, to ask for the Salesians to assist him in the work of that vast Republic. It was proposed to open a College at San Nicolas, and a school of Arts and Trades for the poor boys of the Capital. There was the further important consideration that the immense territories of the Pampas and of Patagonia, overrun by various pagan and uncivilised tribes, might thus be brought under the sway of the Gospel and of civilisation. Don Bosco accepted the proposal, provided that His Holiness Pius IX. sanctioned the scheme. The approval was given immediately, and in November 1875, ten Salesians were sent to South America.

When Don Bosco gave the discourse at the final gathering, he did not confine himself to the subject of the savages, but he said :

" I recommend to you with particular urgency the deplorable position of many Italian families, who are established in the cities and villages of those countries. The parents themselves, and especially their children, unfamiliar with the language and the customs of the country, far away from Church and schools, are either in the impossibility of attending the practices of piety, or if they do attend, are too ignorant to understand them. I am told by letters from those parts that you will find large numbers of children and of adults who can neither read nor write, and who are ignorant

of all religious knowledge. You will find these compatriots of yours, whom poverty or misfortune has cast upon a strange land, and you will strive to make them realise the mercy of God, who is sending you out as missionaries for the good of their souls..."

Thus it was that the Salesian Missions assumed from the first a two-fold task, and thus there have arisen the many institutions in favour of the emigrants, a work since recognised and promoted by ecclesiastical and civil authorities as one of the most important developments in the countries of the new world.

Don Cagliero was the leader of this first expedition of missionaries. After the parting ceremony in the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians, Don Bosco accompanied the missionaries to Genoa, whence they set sail on November 14th, 1875. As soon as they arrived they opened Houses in the Argentine and in Uruguay, with the help of the few local clergy, but keeping always in view their goal amid the savages further south. These lands were inhabited by the most warlike Indians, who had to be kept within their territories by the armed forces of the Government, but who nevertheless frequently raided the settled districts, devastating them with fire and sword. The nature and condition of their districts, with their caverns and marshes and impenetrable forests were wrapped in the thick darkness of the unknown. No one had any reliable knowledge about their territories, for little could be gleaned from the narratives of travellers or of prisoners who had crossed them, and had escaped with the impression that they could only be compared to some *Inferno* of Dante.

There was equal uncertainty about the number of the inhabitants, and the calculations given by the Indians only served to render confusion worse confounded. The caciques, or leaders, gave out that the Indians were simply innumerable, who could impose their will at any time upon the whole Republic. Their pretensions, and the nature of their diplomatic relations with the

Government, their insistence that the latter should make a treaty with them, their threats and declarations of war increased the opinion and dread of their power. In reality their numbers did not exceed eighty thousand.

But there was no such mystery in regard to their customs; the tortures they inflicted upon their captives made them only too familiar. It was well known moreover that they had determined not to accept civilisation in any form, except when it promised some immediate advantage, and they therefore refused all offers of commerce or industry or arts or any social intercourse. From the day on which they were armed and organised into a confederation they would allow no outsider to dwell in their midst, unless he were a bandit or a captive.

They regarded their own religion as a powerful influence for the maintenance and increase of their empire; in every other religion, especially in Christianity, they declared that danger lurked. Thus the missionaries, far from making the word of God triumph in their midst, could not even approach their chief *toldos* or villages without exposing themselves to the most cruel martyrdom that these savages of the deepest dye could invent. With this knowledge, and considering the uselessness of the sacrifice, no Catholic priest had yet dared to cross their wilds. Don Cagliero attempted an expedition about a year after landing in America but it did not reach the desired goal, and he had to turn back. In fact he came to Europe to obtain more missionaries from Don Bosco.

A second group of missionaries therefore set out in 1876, and in 1877 a much larger body consisting of forty members, six being Nuns of Our Lady Help of Christians. They were destined for Villa Colon near Montevideo, and were the pioneers of that other branch of Don Bosco's work which was also to reap immense fruits and have a vast expansion, namely, the care and education of girls and assisting in the civilising of the Indian women. Don Costa

nagna, afterwards raised to the Episcopate, was the leader of the expedition, and many others have since followed, some reaching nearly a hundred members.

As it was as yet impossible to penetrate into the strongholds of the Indians, another plan was adopted. With the approval of Pius IX. and the co-operation of the Archbishop, the missionaries followed out a scheme of opening Schools and Houses in the principal towns near the borders, thus surrounding the wilds of Patagonia with a number of fortresses. They were Institutes where charity and peace abode, and they sought to gather together the boys, particularly those coming from the neighbourhood of the uncivilised parts, that when they were instructed, they might assist them in the advance into the enemy's country. Some of the priests went out to give missions in the neighbouring districts, seeking to gain auxiliaries, and a knowledge of the language and of the customs of the natives, and thus to draw nearer and nearer to their goal. But to some zealous spirits it seemed too long to wait. In 1878, it was decided to try another adventure led by Don Costamagna. After reaching the Rio Parana, they were to embark on the Santa Rosa, which was to take them down the river, and thence by sea to Bahia Blanca; from there the journey to Patagones would be made on horseback.

But this expedition did not await discomfiture at the hands of the Indians, it was brought about by a tempest. On May 21st, Don Costamagna wrote to Don Bosco from Buenos Aires: "Everyone was convinced that escape from shipwreck was hopeless, and the chief engineer, to whom we owe our lives, declared that my vessel might have gone down in such a sea. So clearly did everyone realise this, that the whole crew, from the Captain downwards, and all the passengers went to the Church the day after landing, to join in the *Te Deum* and to hear the Mass of thanksgiving for the favour.

Thus a voyage of three days took thirteen, and could not be completed. When the vessel returned, the Archbishop said : "Tell the whole story to Don Bosco, and say that it is evident that God has ordained this work, which is so furiously opposed by the evil spirit."

In 1879, the Argentine Government decided upon energetic military measures against the Patagonians, both for its own security and also to extend its dominion. This time the Patagonians were beaten and the Argentine soldiers took full advantage of their victory. Thus the missionaries found their chief obstacles removed and were able to make some progress; they were sorry that the sword had preceded the Cross, and that their chief task lay in healing the wounds inflicted upon the natives in the fighting, instead of meeting them in their power and dissuading them from abusing it. In April 1879 Don Costamagna wrote :

"The Salesians have already reached the tribes of the desert, the Indians of the Pampas, who are still in ignorance of the true God; they have already settled among them, learnt to make them understand, and are beginning the work of the Gospel. It is no longer a dream, but the reality so long desired by Don Bosco. We are already at Carrhue, about four hundred miles from Buenos Ayres, and shall soon be in Patagonia on the shores of the Rio Negro, twelve hundred miles from the capital, and still crossing desert wilds."

The announcement of the entrance of the missionaries into Patagonia was made by Mgr. Espinosa, Vicar General of the Archbishop who accompanied the Salesians. "With the help of God we have at last reached our temporary destination, after a most painful journey on horseback, suffering hunger and thirst and sleeplessness. To the discomfort arising from unsuitable food must be added the intense cold which gets into one's bones, and we had not even a hut or tent to shelter us at night."

The Salesians were able to make their first settlement among the tribes in 1880, and from that time bloodshed ceased. The savages themselves recognised that the missionaries were established among them solely to aid them both morally and materially, and their conversion to the true Faith was rapid and wide-spread. That same year the paper called : " L'America del Sud " had an article headed : " The true heroes of the wilderness, " and said : " We do not intend to extol by this title those who penetrated into the deserts of the Pampas last year and conquered it by force of arms. We believe it is due by a much better right to the Salesian Missionaries who, armed only with the Crucifix, entered upon a bloodless conquest of the territory, and converted its inhabitants to Christian civilisation and to real progress. "

By degrees the number of missionaries mounted up ; and while houses and Schools were being opened in the Argentine and Uruguay, in Brazil, Chile and Ecuador, a pontifical brief, issued in 1883, resulted in a further expansion of missions among the savages. His Holiness Leo XIII. constituted the territories of Patagonia into a Vicariate Apostolic and a Prefecture, nominating the first Don Cagliero, just before making him a bishop, and the second Don Fagnano, who had till then directed the mission of Patagones. It was the latter who three years later founded a mission in Tierra del Fuego which he entered on November 1st, 1886, in the company of a small scientific military expedition.

On the night of November 24th a great fire was noticed on the Northern shore, and at dawn on the 25th, the chief of the military expedition went forward with a few soldiers to make a reconnoitre. Towards midday they encountered some thirty Indians, about a dozen of whom were men. As soon as they saw the soldiers they turned and fled, but they were afterwards surrounded and the soldiers sought to make them understand, and to pacify

them by offering them food. But the Indians remained on the defence with their bows and arrows ready, and at some slight show of using them, the rifles of the soldiers rang out and caused much loss of life. At the sound of firing, Mgr. Fagnano hurried from the encampment where he had remained, and arrived upon the scene only to find the damage done. An eye-witness says that Mgr. Fagnano now played the part of a hero. Careless of the danger, he stepped into the midst and upbraided the commandant for his imprudence, which he denounced as a crime. The captain was highly incensed against the man of God who stood up in the wilderness like a prophet condemning the soldier's cruelty. The missionary and the doctor attended to the wounded till evening then they followed the expedition in the work of exploration.

After two days they reached an impetuous river, and not far from it they saw about fifty huts. In order to avoid a repetition of the previous bloodshed, Mgr. Fagnano and the doctor went forward first, making friendly signs, waving a white flag, and calling out "Brother! Brother!" in the Indian language.

Two of the Indians stepped forward with their arrows on the string, and in fact an arrow did come in the neighbourhood of the missionary. He and the doctor then dismounted and went forward with their hands up, to show that they were unarmed. The Indians then lowered their bows and arrows, and went towards the missionary.

On seeing this, some of the soldiers also came forward, offering the Indians food and little presents which they admired exceedingly. Other natives also came up, and one old man made a thorough examination of the horses and riders, and particularly of the missionary, uttering cries of surprise all the time.

The exploration lasted till the end of the year, but as a harvest had to be made in Bahia Tetis till January 16th of the new year 1887. Mgr. Fagnano profited of the occasion to instruct and baptise some

of the savages. On January 25th he reached Patagones, resolved to overcome every obstacle to the founding of a central missionary residence. On July 21st, he and three other missionaries established themselves at Punta Arenas, which was then but a settlement. Towards the end of that year, with one companion, he visited Dawson Island, and some parts of Tierra del Fuego; they met many Indians, invited them to the mission at Punta Arenas, and were able to gain the goodwill of all those they saw.

One of the last occasions when Don Bosco, now feeble, was able to come down in the midst of his religious and boys, was when he met Mgr. Cagliero, who had returned to visit him for the last time. The missionary presented to him some of the nuns who had come back with him, and had brought a little Indian girl. It was like bringing a sample of the apostolic fruits, which the first of his missionaries and of his Bishops had gathered for the Father who was far away, and near the end of his life. Don Bosco was moved to tears. Certainly he saw in that return, in the Bishop and the nuns and the little Indian child, and in the many whom they represented the pledge of what would be accomplished after his death; and that America indeed would not suffice for his missionaries, who would penetrate into Asia, Africa and the East; while in their first field of labour they would increase so much that Don Albera, the present Superior General, speaking at the third General Congress of Co-operators said very appositely, that, as the representative of Don Rua he had travelled the length and breadth of South America and had stayed always in Salesian Houses. This he said to prove the vision of Don Bosco, when he had affirmed that the Salesian Institutes would spread far and wide.

## CHAPTER XV.

### PECUNIARY RESOURCES.

ONE is naturally prompted to be curious as to the source from which Don Bosco drew for his innumerable and costly enterprises. The little property that formed the family inheritance was just enough to maintain the dignity, the independence and stability of character of the small proprietor, and to render more bitter the sacrifice he had to make in taking up work under others; it served to teach him that a stranger's bread contains the salt of wisdom which brings the habit of obedience and submission. The property, as we have seen, was quite inconsiderable, so that he was obliged to depend upon others for the means of his education. He was a proprietor, yet most poor -- such was Don Bosco's earliest qualification. Nor is it without its significance that, when he might have acquired a certain amount of money by accepting the legacy of Don Calosso, he who had no secure prospects, refused it, just because it was for himself. Nor, again, is it without meaning that at his entrance into the ecclesiastical state, the necessary equipment was eagerly provided by friends, whose influence was to provide later on the material sustenance and moral support of his work.

But had he not been endowed by God with the gift of drawing to himself the beneficent charity of others; had he not been guided to choose for the setting of his enterprises the city of Turin, which contains many who are easily disposed to be generous to public benefactors, he would doubtless have arrived at an equal degree of sanctity, but not to the same degree of effectiveness. And by the combination of these two providential arrangements he was destined, like Canon Cottolengo, (1) not only to acquire individ-

(1) In this year, 1917, Canon Cottolengo was declared *Blessed*; his canonisation is still in progress.

ual sanctity, but also to accomplish a work of wide-spread beneficence.

Among other singular coincidences that distinguish his life is also this one — that in the part of Turin that became the centre of his work, Valdocco, where also had arisen the House of Cottolengo (two of the greatest distributors of the charity of the generous) there had also been established another charitable work, that of the Marchioness di Barolo. This was a conspicuous example of Turinese generosity, and of that older type of benevolence, which, coming from one person of great wealth, preserves the name, constitutions and crest of the foundress. Don Bosco had for a time assisted in the spiritual care of this Institute, but the two forms of charity, though both of great merit and providential, are widely different. The first, having more of force of will and of humility in its origin, thereby possesses more spiritual vitality; again it is well-known that where the head of an Institute is poor, or voluntarily makes himself so, and devotes the whole of his endeavours to the work, the sums of money that pass through his hands acquire that incommunicable power which is born of sacrifice, and which can find nothing equivalent in one, who, though the most generous of givers, yet remains rich. A further sign of the difference between these two forms of charity may be read in the fact that while Cottolengo and Don Bosco revered and understood the Marchioness, she, on the other hand, revered them, but could not understand the character of either.

A popular fallacy holds that to upset some oil is a sign of misfortune. To Don Bosco it brought no such thing.

Passing one day near the Royal Palace he met one of the boys who attended his Sunday Oratory. The lad was carrying some provisions, among them a bottle of oil. In his delighted eagerness, the boy ran towards Don Bosco and wished to wave his cap in

welcome, a proceeding which entailed dropping most of the provisions, including the bottle of oil, the contents running down the pavement. Consternation and tears were the result, and expressions of fear of his mother's stick. Don Bosco comforted the boy, took him into a shop and explained matters to the proprietress. The latter, when she knew it was Don Bosco, readily provided another stock of provisions and would take no payment. This was probably the first charitable offering made to him by anyone outside the small circle of his intimates.

From the very beginning of his Oratory, those who knew his work assisted him; some paid for one thing, some for another, and as far back as 1850, when the Oratory was but nine years in existence, his subscribers, more or less regular, were numerous. His first considerable expense was paid by a loan from Don Rosmini. The legal record of the transaction says: "On February 19th, 1851, by a witnessed deed, Francis Pinardi sells to the priests John Bosco, John Borel, Robert Murialdo and Joseph Cafasso land and buildings. The price was 28,500 francs which was covered by 20,000 francs paid by Sig. Gilardi representing Don Antonio Rosmini, the remainder was paid by private agreement." There were accessory expenses to the amount of 3,500 francs paid by Commendatore Cotta, a munificent and constant benefactor of the Oratory, in whose bank the deed was drawn up. Don Bosco paid off the debts by instalments, thus acquiring the property as sole possessor. Don Cafasso's was never paid, for he died in 1860, and freed Don Bosco from it by his will.

But the day soon came when, as he himself expressed it, he must take a longer stride, and set on foot those works which imply the expenditure of vast sums. It was an evening in the Spring of 1851 that he said to his mother: "I want next to build a fine church in honour of St. Francis of Sales." His mother, in her practical fashion, immediately contrasted in her mind the cos

with their resources; the result was that she told her son he had better come to an understanding with God, for everything they had was spent on the boys. "That is exactly what we shall do," he replied: "If you had the money you would give it to me readily, so can we doubt that God would be less generous towards a work which must be for His greater glory?"

Soon after, he asked an architect for a design and then interviewed Sig. Federico Bocca about beginning operations. The latter declared his willingness to undertake the order. Then said Don Bosco:

"But I warn you that sometimes I may not have the money when it is due."

"Oh, in that case, we shall proceed more slowly with the building."

"Oh, no! I want you to get on with it as quickly as possible, and to have it completed within a year."

"Very well, we shall hurry matters on," replied the contractor.

The matter was thus settled. Don Bosco said that he had a little to start with, and Divine Providence would send the rest. As we have seen, Don Bosco pursued the same course in regard to the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians.

It is one of the essentials of heroic charity to know how to be rash. The Ven. Cottolengo had already put up an immense charitable Institute and had charged the Providence of God with the whole debt, merely by the subterfuge of calling it the *Piccola Casa* — the Little House — as though not to frighten the Benefactor; and Providence took care, and still takes care, to honour His own firm thus drawn upon at the dictation of a saint. God does not wait till the Saturday to pay His debts.

Mere human wisdom insists that charity should avail itself of the small amount one possesses, rather than undertake to spend what one has not. To act otherwise would be to run into danger,

for the generality of worthy people are under the delusion, that when some good act has been accomplished one should rest content. Alessandro Manzoni comments upon this idea in *I Promessi Sposi* when he makes Don Abbondio say :

“Those that do good, generally do it all at once, and when they feel the satisfaction of having done it, they consider it quite enough, and do not care to follow it up; but those that are drawn to evil are more persevering, they follow it up to the end, never taking any rest, for a gnawing worm is ever at them.”

This quiet satisfaction of the good should be avoided; one should suspect the tendency to repose upon the oars; charity never says : *enough!*, and hence its apparent recklessness.

And indeed the assistance of Providence came to Don Bosco in strikingly unexpected ways. A heavy debt was due on January 20th, 1858, and Don Bosco was, as usual, penniless. The creditor had already stretched the period agreed upon, but his demand was now a direct one. On the 12th of the month Don Bosco said to a certain few of his boys : “To-day I am in need of a special favour; I am going into the city and while I am away I want one of you to remain in the church and pray.” This was agreed upon.

Out in the town Don Bosco was passing the church of the Lazarist Fathers when a stranger accosted him, and having saluted him, said :

“Don Bosco, is it true that you have need of some money?”

“Rather more than need, it is a downright necessity.”

“Very well, here it is,” and he offered him an envelope containing several notes of thousands of francs. Don Bosco hesitated wondering whether the gentleman was serious. He asked for an explanation, but the stranger refused even his name, and when Don Bosco thanked him, only begged to be remembered in his prayers, and hastened away.

Another time he asked the boys a similar favour. It is his

biographer Don Lemoyne, who relates the fact: "We followed out his directions and prayed up till three o'clock. Towards evening he returned, calm and smiling, as when he had gone out at mid-day. When we asked what had happened, he replied: "To-day at three o'clock there was a serious affair of four hundred pounds to settle with Sig. Paravia; if I could not have paid, it would have entailed a great loss to him and also to the Oratory. There were other debts due, amounting to another four hundred pounds. I went out to see if Providence would send me something, and entered the Church of the Consolata to ask Our Lady not to desert me in this hour of need. Then I walked about for an hour when a man met me and said:

"If I mistake not, you are Don Bosco."

"Yes, I am," I replied.

"Then you are the very one I want, and you have spared me a journey to the Oratory. My master has sent me to you with this packet."

"What is inside?"

"I do not know," replied the man. On opening it Don Bosco found some shares of Government Stock of great value. The man could give no explanation, but declaring his errand finished, went away. Don Bosco continued: "Then I went to Sig. Paravia and when we examined the packet there was enough to pay his four hundred pounds for the printing of the "Catholic Readings," and enough for some other most urgent debts. So good is Divine Providence!"

Again a third time he asked the boy's prayers in 1860. The baker absolutely refused to supply bread unless his bill was paid, and that looked like having nothing to eat that night. Don Bosco narrates the result: "While you were in church praying I went out wondering which way to turn, when I heard a man calling out: "Oh, Don Bosco, I was coming to find you; my master is

lying very ill and wishes to speak to you." When I arrived, the gentleman received me with extreme courtesy, asked me about the Oratory, and after some conversation gave me a packet which contained the money I needed. So to-day I have been able to pay the baker."

Later on, the building of the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians was commenced, and Don Bosco's first payment was to be made at the end of a fortnight for the digging of the foundations. He was just then called to the bedside of a lady who had been paralysed for three months. Don Bosco advised her to make a Novena to Our Lady Help of Christians; she agreed to this and said: "If during this Novena I get well enough just to get out of bed and move about, I shall give an offering for your church." On the last day of the Novena, Don Bosco wanted a thousand francs for the labourers who had dug the foundations, so he went to the lady's house. The maid received him and told him that her mistress was better and had been out several times. Then the lady herself came on the scene and said:

"I am cured, I have already been to thank Our Lady Help of Christians. This envelope is for you, and it will not be the last offering that I shall make."

Don Bosco took the packet home, and on opening it found that it contained the thousand francs he wanted that night.

One day Don Bosco had been preaching on the subject of detachment from temporal goods. A few minutes after he had left the pulpit, a gentleman, who had that day lent Don Bosco about five hundred pounds, came to him and said: "You may tear up this receipt: I have no further need of it. Your words have given me a true conception of the value of worldly things." After some years this gentleman left the world, and his inheritance, to join Don Bosco's Society and live in religious poverty.

A certain Sig. Brosio writes: "One day I went to the Oratory

to see Don Bosco and found him in the playground looking very thoughtful and holding a paper in his hand. On inquiring what was the matter he held out the letter for me to read. It was a bill and an enclosure threatening a law-suit if he did not pay the eighty pounds at once. I pictured Don Bosco being tried for debt, and a sigh escaped me. 'Come, come, Signore, you are not sighing over that surely; do you think Divine Providence will abandon me? Let us go into the chapel and pray, and you will see what Our Lady will do for the Oratory.' We went into the chapel; and as we came out a gentleman wished to speak to Don Bosco and gave him the sum required. "

In 1886 when Don Bosco wanted four hundred pounds to equip the new expedition of missionaries, he received an anonymous letter saying: "I have just read that the Holy Father has sent you eighty pounds towards your good works; such an example moves me to make you an offering of four hundred pounds for your missionary expedition. It is the savings of my younger days, and I willingly offer it to you, so that it may be of service to me in another life to which I am now very near. "

Examples might be given almost indefinitely.

But there was something which distinguished Don Bosco from those who rush into enterprises without reasonable hope of their success; something which made his apparent rashness in reality consummate prudence. It was above all his constancy in prayer, and getting others to pray, his confidence, and the gratitude by which he attributed to Providence alone the results, which a proud mind would attribute to its own endeavours. His biographer writes:

"Don Bosco used to say, and we heard it many times: 'God is the Master of my works; He inspires them and supports them; Don Bosco is but an instrument, and Divine Providence would never do things otherwise than handsomely. Our Lady Help of Christians is my protectress and my treasury. '"

Whenever some particular necessity had arisen, or he was in greater difficulty or trouble than usual, he would appear in the best of spirits, so that we used to say :

"Don Bosco must be in some bother, for he seems so good-humoured to-day." And it nearly always happened that we were correct, and that some extraordinary difficulty had arisen. But Don Bosco's favourite words were those of St. Paul : *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." He was convinced that, as in other cases, when God had tried him, He would grant his request. Of weariness or annoyance he never showed signs. These constant cares were so natural to Don Bosco, that he seemed not to notice them, and they lasted from morning till night, day after day, and all the while he appeared as though the burden was another's and not his. He never made out that he had done anything ; his humility caused him to appear as though he had nothing to do, and had done nothing."

But there were other means, too, by which he made himself worthy of the favours of Divine Providence. First the increase in his love of poverty according as his work increased and its stability became assured. He had however adopted as his own the saying of St. Bernard *Paupertas mihi semper placuit, sordes nunquam* ; "Poverty has always been to me a pleasure, but sordidness never ;" he therefore always gave the strictest care to his person and dress, but even in his clothes as in his room and food his love of poverty was apparent. His shoes and linen were coarse. His cassock was often chosen from those that had been much used, and perhaps one of the mended cassocks given him by some priest for the young clerics to wear. He often displayed his money to his friends, but they invariably saw that it was reduced to a few pence. And the wish he often expressed was : "I do not desire to have anything to leave at death, except the cassock I wear." And when he was in the lowest straits he was most happy.

But while desiring nothing for himself, he willingly engaged in the work of begging for what was needed. To beg was always repugnant to his character, inclined, as he was, to independence and self-respect, and therefore whenever he sought alms it was through necessity and with reluctance. One of the things he most disliked was to have to dine or lunch sometimes out of the Oratory, both because it took him away from his confrères and boys, and because he would have to accept better food. However he not infrequently had to yield to these requests, because many of those, who were going to give him some alms that he required, made it a sort of condition that he should go and dine with them. The Marquis Fassati, one of his chief benefactors, promised him 3,000 francs, but only on the singular arrangement that he would dine with him thirty times, receiving a hundred francs each time. Not until fifteen dinners had been eaten did he free him from the undertaking, and give him the remaining 1,500 francs; promising at the same time a further offering of 10,000 more, which indeed was only a small part of the generous sums he gave to Don Bosco's work. In the last few years of his life Don Bosco undertook, at the request of Pope Leo XIII., the construction of the Sacred Heart Church in Rome; and whoever saw the labours he underwent, when already quite worn out with age, in order to collect the necessary money, will recognise that if Don Bosco had nothing of his own to spend, he had, at any rate, spent his life.

A scrupulous honesty distinguished him in receiving and administering money, but he also desired that its sources should be beyond reproach. When one of his priests asked him what he should do when he was asked to say Mass in various places, he replied: "Accept the invitation where the offering is the least." Two gentlemen once came to give him five hundred francs collected at a carnival; Don Bosco said he was most grateful to them, but he could not accept it, as it came from a species of entertainment

of which he did not approve. A gentleman had lent Don Bosco 4,000 francs on the understanding that at his death he would release him from the whole or part of the debt. Although Don Bosco was called to the bedside of the gentleman when he was dying, the latter gave no hint whatever about the debt and died without apparently thinking of the arrangement. As soon as he was dead, Don Bosco wrote to Turin, telling those in charge at the Oratory to arrange for the payment of 4,000 francs to the relative of the gentleman, an act which astonished all by the delicate thoughtfulness it implied.

In 1850 the Government had confiscated the property of the Servites, and sent some of the furniture to Don Bosco. He accepted it, but only to restore it to the expelled religious. In 1884 his paper mills at Mathi were taking part in the National Exhibition and the Committee urged that he would gain a great deal by keeping the machinery going on Sunday. But Don Bosco wouldn't hear of it, maintaining that there was a precept about keeping the Sunday holy.

Debts he regarded as inviolable contracts; the fact was so well known that his signature was held as the strongest credit by merchants and firms who were contemplating solely business transactions. An authoritative witness at the canonical process said :

"He never did the smallest injury to anyone. It happened several times that when about to launch some costly enterprise trusting wholly in Providence, he would warn the contractors that his payments might not always be punctual. But he could so well be relied upon to pay, that they would reply : "If we were only as certain of others as of you ! It may be a little late, but the money is certain." In this regard the National Bank of Rome sold to him the ground for the extension of the church and for the site of the Schools attached, on very long credit ; moreover when he was acting in his name they lent me considerable sums for seven

ears with only a simple receipt, and requiring no security. When the bank lent me as much as 80,000 francs (three thousand two hundred pounds) the Director merely said: "We are dealing with Don Bosco, who has Divine Providence at his disposition; we shall not be the losers."

Another witness said: "My duties often took me to wholesale dealers to order large supplies for the Oratory. They never asked for a letter showing my authorisation for these orders, but directly I said it was intended for the Oratory, they accepted the order at once. The directors said they executed Don Bosco's orders with entire confidence, because they knew by experience how just was the Servant of God, and that they were sure to be paid sooner or later, while large sums owing for goods supplied to others were often lost."

A third said: "I once heard Don Bosco sending Don Rua out to pay some money which had fallen due. The latter said he was serving this sum for a larger debt which was soon to be paid." But Don Bosco replied:

"First of all, pay that which is now due, for there is an obligation to fulfil; a week yet remains to get the money for the other; I hope Providence will send it in time. The important point is that this first one should not be postponed." Firms in several countries sent goods to his Houses only on his word; loans never took any legal form, but just his signature. When the Salesians first went to South America, banks lent them large sums and sent the receipts over to Don Bosco to be signed by him.

Discretion accompanied his sense of justice. To those who trusted him in getting alms he gave this rule: "Our needs must be made known; if others do not know them, they cannot possibly think of helping us; but when they have been informed, let them do what their generosity shall inspire; I never go beyond that."

He was careful also that none should be over-generous in

their charity, though he seldom found his protests of any avail. One day when Don Bosco was in some anxiety wondering how to get the money for a certain debt of three hundred francs, an elderly man came into the playground and said: "I have saved a little money and I want to do some good. Here is an offering for you."

"But have you put by something in case of sickness?" asked Don Bosco.

"Oh, Providence will see to that, and before I die I want to send something in advance. If I fall sick there is the hospital. And away he went. The purse contained exactly the three hundred francs required.

Another day an old woman came to the Oratory and said to Don Bosco:

"I am a poor woman and have always been hard-working; my son is dead and it is nearly time for me to go. Here are three hundred francs I have saved; I give them to you. I have a little left for the doctor and the funeral."

"I shall accept the money with pleasure," replied Don Bosco, "but it shall not be touched until after your death; if any need arises, come and take it, for it is yours."

"Oh no! I wish to have the merit of making an offering for your work, so take it and use it. If I am in need I shall come to ask you for help, and you will have the merit of your charity. But will you come and see me when I am ill?" "Certainly," replied Don Bosco, but on the following day when he thought of going to the charitable old woman he found that he did not know the address. After waiting a couple of days, another woman came to call him to her. He went to the house and the woman desired to receive the Last Sacraments. They were administered and she died in peace.

Don Bosco himself relates the following:

"During the building of the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians, a lady and gentleman gave me at various times 6,000 francs. A few years afterwards I discovered that their affairs had not been successful, and that by a bank failure they had lost nearly all their money. Very much reduced in life they took a poor lodging in the city of Milan. I went and found them out and offered to return the whole sum, but the husband wouldn't hear of it, saying that he had given it to me as an alms."

"Well," I answered, "You will receive from Our Lady what you have given and in the measure which you shall require." From that day I sent them money regularly, and when it had amounted to 6,000 francs the husband died, and the lady in due time made an excellent marriage. She then began, and still continues, to send money for our work."

It should also be pointed out that although Don Bosco was prodigal in one way, he was most careful of the manner in which these alms were spent, mindful of the sacrifices they frequently cost the donors. No expense could make him hesitate if the work was necessary, but he would not allow a penny to be spent on anything superfluous, and forbade the least wastefulness in clothes, or food, or paper and the like.

Thus by a happy combination of boldness and confidence in God, of hazard and strict uprightness, of seeking help from the generous and of doing them whatever service lay in his power, of wholesale spending and careful counting, he not only obtained thousands and thousands of pounds and expended them wisely and disinterestedly, but he provided an infinite number of good deeds and the occasion of infinite merit. Very often God rewarded these benefactors long before eternity was in sight. Many a one might have made his own the words of Signor Cotta: "Ever since I began to help Don Bosco, my affairs have prospered more and more."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE SALESIAN CO-OPERATORS.

THE aid which Don Bosco received from all quarters, and which rendered his great enterprises possible, gave him the idea of forming a permanent organisation, which should ensure for them the material and moral support of those who would form the volunteer force, as it were, of the regular Salesian Society.

It has been pointed out that, as soon as the boys in his very earliest work — the Sunday Oratory — became too numerous to be taught and controlled by one, he found zealous assistants in several priests. But they already had their own avocations to attend to, and could not therefore give continual or regular aid. It was necessary to find volunteers in laymen, and these were found very readily and in goodly numbers. It is easy to see what variety of occupations were found for them, considering the manifold nature of the Oratory that we have already considered. The lay co-operators were not wanting, and they were busied principally with the clothes and linen of the boys. The experience of this generosity in one quarter gave Don Bosco good hope that he could create it, or discover it in other parts, but he saw that it could not be stimulated and directed without some organisation. With the idea of a rule, there came also that of enlarging the field of labour to which the co-operators had till then devoted themselves, and which varied as circumstances necessitated. His idea was upon the line of an association of secular persons who by their freedom would be more effective in certain kinds of work than religious could be. They would devote themselves to every form of good work, to help vocations to the priesthood, to the establishment of foundations

for the benefit of the young, and particularly of those in need of material assistance. The undertakings of the Salesians would give them a definite object for their efforts, which might otherwise be divided up and lost.

However, such a vast design necessitated some bond, some spiritual force which would unite the members into a whole, so that in their work and merits and endeavours there might be the required unity and community of interests. Therefore a simple rule was drawn up and approved by Pope Pius IX. in 1876. The association formed a species of Third Order. But while the Third Orders of the Franciscans and of the Dominicans seek to promote especially the spirit of piety among persons living in the world, this Salesian Third Order is principally devoted to the exercise of works of charity, which will promote the religious and civil welfare of others; it would take such forms as the education of the young, the diffusion of good books, meetings and conferences, and every good work, in short, which would promote among the people at large the fervour of a good Christian life. Anyone who has reached the age of sixteen and who desires to be enrolled should apply to one of the Salesian Houses, or to the Superior General in Turin. There are no particular practices of piety, except that the Co-operators add to their prayers an *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* every day in honour of their patron, St. Francis of Sales, according to the intentions of the Holy Father. Frequent reception of the Sacraments is recommended, and each one participates in the good works of the Salesians in all parts of the world. In order that they might have some recognised bond between them, Don Bosco founded "The Salesian Bulletin," a monthly review, distributed among the Co-operators, and giving an account of the good works that are being accomplished by their aid throughout the whole world.

His Holiness Pius IX. had his name placed at the head of the Co-operators, he exhorted many Cardinals and Bishops to be

enrolled and to certain persons in his confidence he said : " The Salesian Co-operators are destined to achieve much for the good of the Church and of Society. The very object of their work directed to the education and the amelioration of the conditions of the young, will make that work more and more esteemed as time goes on; therefore I seem to see not only individuals but whole cities enrolled among the members. That is why I think so highly of them and have favoured them so much. "

His Holiness Leo XIII. said one day to Don Bosco : " I wish to be not only enrolled in the Association, but to be your chief Co-operator. " And on another day he said : " Whenever you address the Salesian Co-operators tell them that I give them my heartiest blessing; remind them that the object of their Association is to co-operate in the protection and education of the young, and that they should form one heart and soul in the attainment of the ends of the Society of St. Francis of Sales. " His saintly successor Pius X. was a prominent Co-operator long before he ascended the throne of the Apostles.

The Association was thus formed, and soon increased to thousands, and hundreds of thousands of members. It includes both the great and the lowly, the rich and the poor among its Associates. One of its early general meetings was held at Milan, and this proved to be the forerunner of the great Congresses of Co-operators which have since been held both in Europe and America. From what has gone before it will be evident that one of their principal objects is to procure the material means for the good works which the Salesian Society has in view. It was this generous charity that Don Bosco had in mind, when he addressed to the Association the beautiful letter, known as his Last Testament. It is a masterpiece from one who had spent not only earthly goods, but his very life and being in the service of those, on whose behalf he desires to enlist sympathy. It is as follows :

“ My dear Co-operators,

I feel that the end of my life is drawing near, but before I depart from you for ever, there is a debt I must pay you, and so satisfy a deep craving of my heart.

It is a debt of immense gratitude for all that you have done in assisting me in the works I have undertaken on behalf of the young, so that they may be brought up as good Christians, useful to themselves and to society, and so that they may gain their eternal destiny.

Without your charity little or nothing could have been accomplished; but with it and the grace of God, we have been able to wipe away many a tear, and save many a soul; it has enabled us to gather into homes and schools thousands of the young who would have otherwise been desolate, and to provide for their future. With the help of your charity we have established Missions in the farthest confines of the earth, in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, and sent out hundreds of evangelical labourers to cultivate the vineyard of the Lord.

Through your generosity again our printing-presses have sent out millions of copies of good books in defence of the truth, to promote piety, and to support good morals.

Through your charity we have built many churches and chapels in which from generation to generation there will be sung the praises of God and of His blessed Mother, and by means of which great numbers of souls will be saved.

Convinced as I am that, after God, all this and much more must be ascribed to the effective assistance of your generosity, I feel that I must make known to you again, before I end my days, my most profound gratitude, and I thank you again with all my heart.

But as you have assisted me so well and so constantly, I beg you to continue to assist my successor after my death. The works that have been undertaken, thanks to your generosity, no longer

have need of me, but they will always have need of you, and of all those who, like you, are moved to promote good works. I confide and recommend them to you all. I feel that I cannot cease to intercede with you for my children, but I must perforce lay the pen aside.

Farewell my dear Co-operators; many of you I have not been able to know personally in this world, but that is of little consequence; in the next life we shall know each other and shall rejoice over the good works, which, by the grace of God, we may have been able to do while on earth, and especially those on behalf of necessitous youth. ”

But it will not do to regard the Association of Co-operators as just the layman's part, corresponding with, and facilitating the work of the religious side of the Society. That would be a very imperfect view. The true idea of Don Bosco, of his successors and followers, and of the international congresses held up till now included far more than that; the expectations they founded upon these general gatherings were far higher. They saw in the Association the hope and possibility of making it a real social force. As a matter of fact, a large body of persons having as a main directing idea to promote a religious movement, which is the newest and most expansive of our era; who recognise that the hopes of Christianity in the future depend upon the success of the moral, religious and civil up-bringing of the young, especially of the masses; who are able to see that from this foundation, the work of the Salesians and their Co-operators is capable of being developed everywhere and in a hundred forms; a body with these aspirations with a spiritual bond between them, but exteriorly bound by the loosest of ties, and kept informed of what the efforts of all are accomplishing in every part of the globe — such an institution is and is capable of becoming more and more, a power in the world a power which, if understood in its proper bearings, might be called

the salt of the earth, because it endeavours to counteract the work of the enemies of religion, and the baneful effects of indifferentism, by a wisely-directed zeal in the promotion of good works and healthy influences.

It was Don Bosco's acute appreciation of human nature that made him institute an association for his many and widely dispersed Co-operators; for, apart from any spiritual advantages thereby accruing, experience proves that very little can be achieved for the common good, if those who are desirous of accomplishing it are scattered and isolated, and unknown to each other; but that, on the other hand, a purpose is attained by associating those concerned in a definite body with definite aims, even though the registering of names and a promise of co-operation entails an effort which some may not be disposed to make. In this respect again Don Bosco was up-to-date, and gave to the Church by means of the Association of Co-operators a widespread organisation whose immense possibilities are not yet even known.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### DON BOSCO AS A SPEAKER AND AUTHOR.

**D**ON BOSCO's intellectual outlook was a thoroughly practical one. The measure and nature of his gifts must be sought in his work, in the zeal and excellent judgment which were displayed in its performance, and in the alternative play of the faculties of intuition and reflexion. He could divine by a sort of instinct what action would be appreciated by subsequent circumstances, and his acute observation allowed nothing to escape that experience could teach. Yet, if we are to examine his position as a fluent, effective speaker and writer on a multitude of subjects, we must not separate these factors of a complex whole from the main work of his life; nor must we deduce from them alone his intellectual gifts, or his power and art of producing what was new and entirely his own.

Writing and speaking were to him but other means for working out his apostolate. As he applied to the education of his boys the skill he had gained in many trades, so he applied to it the arts of speaking and writing. Therefore in his books or discourses it was never his intention to add to the departments of knowledge on which he was engaged — leaving apart the question of his capabilities in that direction — but he took them as they were, and sought to remove their errors and difficulties, so that they might become for the young mind an intellectual food, at once healthy and nutritious, both palatable and easily digestible. He desired to explain and spread knowledge, and in achieving that purpose, he displayed gifts remarkable both for their number and quality.

Knowing that he was overwhelmed with affairs of every kind, but not acquainted with his methods, one would be inclined to conclude, when his publications appeared every now and again, that they must be merely thrown together in hap-hazard style; but on the contrary, he never set about writing his works without having consulted many authorities of approved merit.

As an example of his careful reading it will suffice to glance at a letter written by him to a firm at Modena, on April 8th 1863 :

“ I would willingly promote the diffusion of the work : *Chantrel's popular history of the Popes* ; but it would be well if someone would undertake the improvement of the text, which is built upon French authorities only, and in some places, quite innocently no doubt, disguises the truth and omits important facts. ”

Then, having shown that Chantrel confuses some of the acts of St. Cletus with those of St. Anacletus, he continues :

“ He follows the Gallican chronology, and is therefore in opposition to such learned Italian authors as Baronius, Giaconio, Orsi, Sandino etc. He abounds in pleasant discourses on things of little importance, and omits essential matters in almost all the Popes : for example, the acts of the martyrdom of St. Clement and of St. Alexander are entirely passed over, whereas they are regarded as authentic by the Bollandists, by Surio, Ruinart etc. The very interesting things written by St. Ambrose about St. Caius, and which are related in the Acts of St. Gabinius, Susanna, Sebastian and companions, are not even hinted at by Chantrel. I mention just these things in general because a letter does not admit of more, but by confronting these authors with such historical writers as Eusebius of Caesarea, Theodoret, Socrates, Sosomenes, Nicephorus, Callistus, Evagrius, and later writers, it will be evident that serious emendations in the text are desirable. ”

When fully equipped, he either wrote the whole text himself, or carefully revised whatever he had to dictate, and enriched his

work by first-hand quotations. The proof-sheets were corrected by him with the utmost care.

Wherever he happened to be, his spare moments were devoted to reading and writing. When he was at the Oratory, if he had no time during the day, he sought it at night. When he was away, particularly if he were going out to preach, he took writing materials with him, or the proofs of some printed matter, and wrote in the train or carriage. At the change of horses or trains he spent the time in writing, heedless of the noise, and leaning on a wall, or going into one of the rooms of the inn. If he were out walking alone, the time was spent in meditating and jotting down notes. He could work in a railway carriage as tranquilly as though in his room. It often happened that the printers were in a hurry for his manuscript, when he had not written a line. But he was not disturbed at this. He would sit down to write in the evening, continue during the night, and in the morning the printer would have the copy.

He was greatly assisted in this by the rare faculty of being able to attend to quite different things at the same time without confusing them. One Sunday he told Don Berto that, while preaching in the morning, he had sketched out mentally a little work for the *Catholic Reading* series, and also solved a difficult problem in regard to some household arrangements.

In regard to letters he could dictate as many as ten at a time, passing from one to another without confusing either his arguments or their sequence. As he invariably replied to everyone who wrote to him, his correspondence was vast. Sometimes in a day and night he would write or outline as many as two hundred and fifty letters, and on a hundred different topics. It will be seen that his versatility was only equalled by his exceptional memory, which had been phenomenal from his childhood.

It has already been related that, when he was ordained priest

he asked at his First Mass as a principal grace the gift of efficacy in word.

Facility of speech, and of selecting the matter, he had by nature. Soon after his ordination when he had spent a few months at St. Francis' Institute for the clergy, the parish priest of his native place asked the Spiritual Director of the Institute, if he had tested Don Bosco's gifts for preaching. Don Cafasso said that there had been no occasion of doing so "Then," replied the parish priest, "If you wish to know them, send him to preach a Lenten course or a Novena without any preparation, and you will discover them." Don Cafasso agreed to do so, and a little later when a Novena had to be preached, he charged Don Bosco to do it, only giving him notice the evening before. Don Bosco obeyed, and having heard the first sermon with much admiration, Don Cafasso asked him if he had the matter for the other eight sermons. He said he had, and the Director and others wondered at the readiness with which the young priest agreed to undertake so many discourses.

But Don Bosco had no faith in improvising sermons; therefore he never went into the pulpit, particularly in places of any importance, without putting into writing what he was going to say. It was a saying of his that the sermon which does the most good is the one that has been best prepared. Hence we find that he had written and corrected meditations and instructions for a fortnight's mission to the people; various courses of sermons to religious, to seminarists, to nuns, to boys; novenas or triduum for the Forty Hours; panegyrics and discourses for the principal feasts of the year.

However, as time went on and his occupations multiplied, he had to be satisfied with jotting down the outlines, and sometimes he had to speak extempore. His only preparation then consisted in a few minutes' thought, or in an *Ave Maria* said as he ascended the pulpit. Not infrequently, when he found that he had not had

a correct idea of the nature of his audience, he changed the subject there and then.

But in all cases his discourse was perfectly methodical. A text of Scripture was followed by the division of his arguments or by a description of the feast that was being celebrated, then some theological point illustrated by history or analogy or a parable — this was the principal part of his discourse. The practical application followed.

Clearness and simplicity were always his chief endeavours. It seemed to him that this had been a solemn admonition to him from God. He himself relates how after he had been but a few months ordained, he was invited to go to Lavriano to preach the panegyric of St. Benignus.

"I readily consented, for that district was the native place of my friend and colleague Don Grassino. I was anxious to do honour to the occasion, and so I carefully prepared and wrote out my discourse in a clear and polished style; I got it ready, persuaded that it would do me credit. But God was pleased to give my vainglory a good lesson. On the feast day I was going to say Mass at the place, and in order to get there in time I had to go on horseback. About half way, I had reached the valley of Casal Borgone, when suddenly a dense flock of sparrows rose from a field by the roadside, where millet had been sown. The horse took fright and galloped away over fields, roads and meadows. I kept to the saddle for a time, but as it was gradually getting out of place I tried a manoeuvre in horsemanship, with the result that I was thrown headlong upon a heap of flint stones. A neighbour saw the accident and with his servant came to my aid. He found me unconscious, and took me to his house till I was able to be moved.

"After this experience I made a firm resolution to prepare my future discourses with the glory of God in view, and not in order to appear erudite or literary."

Having learnt a great deal of poetry by heart he often dropped into rhyme when preaching, and it was only after much care that he corrected this defect. When he had succeeded in eliminating every artifice, and when one took note of his clear deliberate manner without gesture or effective pauses and such like, one was at first inclined to think him over-rated. The man as a speaker did not seem to correspond with his growing fame as a man. It was necessary to wait till his discourse was over and then to seek for its effects not in the countenance of the listeners, but in their hearts. He preached frequently and regularly till 1860, after which his works at the Oratory became so manifold, that he could not spend much time elsewhere. After 1865 he stayed regularly at the Oratory, except for some isolated sermons. The most frequent exercise of speaking was in his little discourses to the boys. In regard to these he says :

“ If you are going to arouse interest and to do good in preaching to the young, you must use stories, examples and illustrations; but what is most important is that the details should be made clear, and even minute circumstances brought out. It is in this way that the young become interested in the persons and scenes described, they are carried away by the joy or sorrow according to circumstance, and await with eager expectancy the final development of the story. ”

He took means to correct himself in faults of style, similar to those he adopted to perfect his method of speaking in public. Knowledge, good sense, and experience of what was most effective led him to cure himself of a fault which is too easily contracted in the schools — that of being too rhetorical. Don Cerruti writes : “ I remember with gratitude and emotion those early years. With his customary straight-forwardness, Don Bosco described to us one by one the special pains he had taken during his courses in literature to acquire a florid style, well-rounded periods etc., and what strict

training he had afterwards to go through to free himself from the habit, and to acquire that straightforward, simple but correct style, which made it a pleasure to read. He also told us that when he wrote his Ecclesiastical History he read it to his mother; she was a woman of rare virtue, but of simple education; and according as it seemed clear to her or not he altered or left it. In this manner he re-wrote whole paragraphs so as to make himself quite clear to the average reader, but without abandoning the requirements of art."

His model in language and style was the author Silvio Pellico, a man for whom Don Bosco had the highest regard not only for his merit and his misfortunes, but for the humility with which he bore his universal fame. Pellico revised some of Don Bosco's manuscripts, and one day put to him a question for which he was always grateful. He asked him whether he made much use of the dictionary, and Don Bosco replied that he had taken it for granted that he had a sufficient knowledge of his mother tongue, and that with so many calls upon him he had not much time for consulting dictionaries.

"Oh no," answered Silvio Pellico; "do not be too sure of yourself and you must give yourself time. Personally I can never write a page without consulting the dictionary, and if I omit to do so I often fall into errors. It is a most necessary practice, in order to make sure of the exact meaning and force of words — not to mention their spelling. One often imagines himself to be familiar with terms, while he is in reality under a wrong impression. It is easy to fall into foreignisms or dialect. Take my advice, always have the dictionary by you. If you do so, you will see that I am right in taking the liberty of advising you."

Don Bosco adopted his friend's counsel, and after that he even took a dictionary with him while on his journeys. It was a piece of advice that he handed down to his clerics and priests

He sometimes put to one or another the question made to him by Silvio Pellico. The one questioned would perhaps smile at being taken apparently for a pupil, but when forced to answer in the negative Don Bosco would say: "It was Silvio Pellico's advice to me, and I have experienced its worth; in order to write correctly I must constantly refer to the dictionary."

He was further convinced of the labour and perseverance required to write well, by a lesson given him all unconsciously by the great writer Manzoni himself. In September 1850 Don Bosco was a guest of Antonio Rosmini at Stresa, and met there the Marquis Arconati. This gentleman took Don Bosco to visit the great writer, who was staying with his stepson Signor Stampa at Intra. Manzoni made both visitors stop to lunch and afterwards showed Don Bosco some of his manuscripts. He saw that they were covered with corrections, and this revealed to what carefully the reformer of Italian prose had devoted himself, in order to acquire clearness and elegance.

Don Bosco's aim was to bring to the level of the average reader his ideas and words, and he therefore avoided all subtlety of thought, so that clearness of style came more easily to him than to the great Lombard Master. But by his clearness of expression, by the appropriateness of word to idea, his constant application to, and recommendation of, the dictionary's aid, by his careful watchfulness to make the expression fit the thought, and not vice versa, he may be considered to have a better right to be styled a follower of Manzoni, than many who have appropriated this title. His fault was perhaps in occasionally dropping into too familiar language, and in making too little use of his power of displaying strength and vigour.

At any rate we know one master's opinion. Don Bosco was invited one morning by the writer Nicolò Tommaseo and the latter is heard to remark: "Dear Don Bosco, it is a pleasure for me

to say that I consider your style clear and easy; it is just the style for explaining matters to the people at large in the manner they best understand. You have the gift of making even abstruse subjects clear and easily grasped."

Among his early writings some were on religious subjects, and some on other topics which would be of interest and advantage to the people. In 1844, three years after his ordination, he brought out a small work of a hundred and fifty pages entitled *L'Enologo Italiano* — the Italian wine-producer. It gave a complete description of the method of vine cultivation, and of all the stages of preparation of the wine, the mistakes commonly made, remedies against deterioration or sourness and all the arts of the wine-producer.

The book was widely distributed among the country-people, among doctors, the clergy and others, who were then beginning that movement for the promotion of agriculture, afterwards adopted by the State. It has now become so rare, that not even the well-stocked library at the Oratory of Turin possesses a copy.

On September 11th, 1845, King Charles Albert decreed the adoption of the metric system, in place of the old complicated system of weights and measures. The government had taken the precaution of distributing beforehand various leaflets explaining the system, and the teachers were recommended to give the necessary instructions. But before these pamphlets were published, and even before the decree was issued, Don Bosco had undertaken the composition of a small book entitled: *The decimal metric system simplified, preceded by the first four rules of Arithmetic*, compiled by John Bosco, priest. His principal aim was to arm the country people and simple folk against cheats who might impose on their ignorance.

Later on he developed the Arithmetical part of the work. He took the manuscript to Paravia, the publisher, and when he had the proof-sheets to correct, he saw that a certain difficult calc-

tion should be cast into another form. He therefore delayed the printing. Strangely enough a book of the same kind was being printed by the same publisher for Professor Giulio, who taught mathematics at the University of Turin. More strangely still the professor was also puzzled by the very same problem. The two authors, learning of each other's difficulty, went several times to the publisher to see if the other had found a solution, and this continued for some days. Don Bosco was puzzling his brain day and night, but no enlightenment came; so much so, that he went to stay with his friend Don Picco outside the city in order to be free from distractions. But even there the problem seemed insoluble, when quite suddenly the formula came to him and he took it to the publisher. The professor had not found a solution, so he adopted Don Bosco's, and both treatises were held in high repute. Later on Don Bosco published a more complete edition of his work.

But in order to assist the dull of intellect to grasp the new system of weights and measures, he wrote and staged a comedy in three acts, called: *The decimal metric system*. It represented a market with various classes of buyers and sellers. The buyers were quite ignorant of the obligation of using the new weights and measures, or pretended to have no desire to know them, so they demanded to be served in the old style. The seller, knowing the decree, observed that the old system was abolished; the buyer argued against the innovation, the confusion and deceit. They became excited, one trying to persuade, the other not willing to be persuaded, until at last the seller manages to get a gleam of light into the mind of the buyer; by degrees he gets him to grasp the whole system, until he makes his purchases quite correctly and goes home wiser and contented. Other characters are brought on the scene to be instructed in the measures of length, area, volume etc. and the whole is interwoven with such amazing

situations and discussions, and the advantages of the system so well demonstrated, that Don Bosco succeeds admirably bringing mirth, interest and instruction out of an otherwise subject.

One of the amusing blunders became quite famous; it lay greatly in the translation on account of the play on words. The reader should be acquainted with the fact that a *brenta* is a cask of a hundred litres, a litre being nearly a quart.

A young man comes in with the cask on his shoulders, having relieved himself of his burden he leans against it and asks, "How great is a litre?" The one explaining gives him briefly the relative position in the scale, and then tells him to take his stand by the *brenta*, meaning, of course, to deduce the other measure from it. But the dull-witted youth, becoming more and more muddled, goes over and leans against the cask and exclaims: "How great the litre is!" This mixture of ideas, and play of words invariably caused much mirth.

The celebrated Don Ferdinand Aporti having seen this comedy said: "Don Bosco could not have hit upon a more effective way of making the decimal system popular; one learns it here laughing."

In 1847 he brought out one of his first works of a religious character. It was a manual of piety for the young, and its success must have been one of the largest on record. A hundred and twenty-two editions were brought out during Don Bosco's life-time and, in various languages, more than six million copies have been issued. It was intended to supply a widely-felt need in regard to manuals of this sort for the young. In the preface he says it was his desire to prevent them from two mistakes commonly made. "The first is the idea that to serve God means a life of sadness, and altogether without any amusement or pleasure. I

not so, my dear boys, and it is my desire to show you how to live a true Christian life and to be happy and joyful as well. The other false idea is the hope of a long life, and of the chance of being reconciled to God in old age or on one's death-bed. But it is clear that very many have been deceived in that way. Who can assure us that we shall ever reach old age? It would be necessary to make an agreement with death to wait for us till then; but life and death are in the hands of God, Who disposes of them according to His will. Moreover, as a person is in youth, how will he be in old age."

When King Charles Albert had given liberty to the press, the papers took up regular controversies on political facts and principles. Don Bosco then issued a bi-weekly paper called *L'Amico della Gioventù*, The Young People's Friend — which treated of questions concerning the political life of the nation in a style suited to young minds. When it ceased another began on similar lines, under the direction of De-Vivaldi. Thus Don Bosco withdrew from any even remotely political work, and the topics dealt with by the newspaper were not of a character which was likely to be of service to his Oratory. This abstention from politics he afterwards firmly maintained, and insisted upon the like action in his followers. He often repeated his wish that the Salesians should keep out of all political strife, for they had been called by God to something quite different — the care of the young, especially the poor and neglected. He said: "There are many in the church who are fully capable of dealing with these thorny questions; there is a whole army prepared both to fight and defend the camp, to protect the baggage, and for all the other efforts necessary for victory." He discouraged even the reading of political papers.

In 1848 the Jews and all the sects of religion were given the rights of the free exercise of their forms of worship. One of

the first uses they made of their freedom was to flood the country with anti-Catholic literature. The *Opinione* gave them every support. Don Bosco saw that the Catholic party was not prepared to make a strong defence, and he took up again his writing for the public, but on entirely defensive lines. It may be said that from now onwards, all his writing had in view the necessity of opposing a barrier to these attacks upon the faith. He began by a little work entitled: *Advice to Catholics* of which two hundred thousand copies were printed. In its preface is the profession of faith which not only inspired all his publications, but, by asserting his devotion to the Popes and to the Bishops, was to him a mission and a boast. He says:

"Jesus Christ said to St. Peter: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, because I shall be with its Pastor all days even to the consummation of the world.' This he said to St. Peter and to his successors, the Roman Pontiffs, and to no one else. Do not believe anyone who tells you differently; he is deceived. You should be intimately convinced of this great truth; when the Successor of St. Peter is, there is the true Church of Jesus Christ. No one is in the true Church unless he is a Catholic; no one is Catholic unless he is in communion with the Pope. Our Pastors, especially the Bishops, keep us in union with the Pope; the Pope keeps us united to God."

The *Catholic Readings* had their origin in the same circumstances. They began in 1853 and still continue. Some of the numbers constituted series which he afterwards collected together and published as separate works; the first of this sort was: *The well-instructed Catholic* (*Cattolico Istruito*), which was re-issued in 1882 under the title of *The Catholic in the midst of the world*. It is in dialogue form and deals with the errors of unbelievers and heretics, and their appropriate refutation.

These *Catholic Readings*, by the variety of their matter, their attractive and easy style are considered the model of what instructive, popular literature ought to be. Their effectiveness was such that the sectarians not only replied in the press, but challenged Don Bosco to public disputes on religious matters; they were held in the Oratory itself. One day, when the Waldenses had deputed two of their Ministers to debate on Purgatory, and Don Bosco confronted them with the Bible, one of them said: "The Latin text, and also the Italian text are not trustworthy, I must refer the matter to the original Greek." Don Bosco had it beside him, and gave it to the Minister, who began to turn over its pages with an imposing air, but soon after, making some excuse, he put it aside. He did not even know the Greek Alphabet. A few days later some of the Protestant leaders went to Don Bosco and wished to bribe him to cease the publications of his Readings, with an offer of four thousand francs. They suggested that he should confine himself to his scientific publications which had been so successful, and when he refused to accept their proposal they went away with threats of revenge, not knowing that all their conversation had been overheard by two of Don Bosco's boys, who had placed themselves near by, where they could be at hand, if necessary, as the demeanour of the sectaries was not at all reassuring.

When Don Bosco was engaged in his study of the Bollandists and of other ecclesiastical historians, he began to regret that he had not thought of developing the History of the Church around the lives of the Popes, for these had been the very centre of its life, and against them the main attacks of hostile writers had been delivered. Influenced by the importance of this view, and becoming even more impressed by the vital part played by the Popes in the development of the Church, he began in 1851 a universal history of the Church under the form of Biographies of the Popes. He worked at it for ten years, but his occupations

prevented the issue of more than three volumes comprising the Popes of the first three centuries. His habit of carrying his manuscripts about with him on his journeys had its drawbacks. Once he left a considerable part of his manuscripts behind in a village, where he had gone to preach. Fortunately they were discovered by Don Savio; but the second time, he lost in a train a whole volume prepared for the press and in spite of inquiries and searches it was never found. He had not the time to go through the research necessary to write another copy; the work was therefore interrupted and so remained. It was thought to be the one of his productions that he took most interest in. Don Arfossi who wrote a good deal at his dictation, said that as he dictated that work he seemed to be in prayer. He always began by invoking the Holy Spirit, and said a prayer of thanksgiving at the close.

The same zeal urged him to write his *History of Italy* for the use of schools. He dictated it to Michael Rua, and a great part of it was copied out by Signor Voli, afterwards a member of the Senate and Mayor of Turin. It went to the press in 1855. With much misgiving, Don Bosco had taken note of the errors and omissions in the many histories of Italy, in regard to the humanising and progressive influence of the Church and of the Papacy upon the country. He therefore divided the work according to his stand-point into two parts: — Italy under Paganism, and Italy under Christianity. This separation of Paganism from Catholicism and his determined preference for the latter was, with him, fundamental — and he insisted upon it both in his writing and teaching. Don Cerruti has preserved the following words spoken by Don Bosco towards the end of his life: "The education generally given in the Colleges, based entirely on the pagan classics and imbued with maxims and opinions that are exclusively pagan will never form true Christian characters, especially in our times when the school is everything. I have constantly fought against

this perverse method, which tends to spoil the minds and hearts of the young in their best years, and it was my ideal to reform it upon a true Christian basis. For this reason I published an expurgated edition of the chief Latin classics used in the schools; for this purpose also I began the publication of Latin Christian classics. I considered that by the doctrine and examples they contained, and by their elegant and robust style, they would supply what was lacking in the others, which are the product of the reasoning or intellectual faculty alone; I considered that they would perhaps nullify the destructive effects of pagan naturalism, and restore the honour due to the productions of Christian Letters. In one word, this has been my constant aim in the counsel and warnings I have given, both by word of mouth and in writing, to the Directors and masters in the Salesian Society. Now in my old age I shall die in sorrow, resigned indeed, but saddened at the thought that I have not been more generally understood, and that I have not been able to see fully established that reform in education and teaching, to which I have devoted all my strength, and without which, I repeat, we can never have the young student purely and entirely Catholic. "

Meeting for the first time the celebrated Latinist, Signor Vallauri, he did not hesitate to rebuke him for having written that the Christian Latin writers, by being wholly intent upon the defence or the spread of Religion, had, in his idea, neglected, or rather debased the language. Don Bosco asked him if he was ignorant of the fact that St. Jerome had been likened to Livy, Lactantius to Cicero and so on. Vallauri reflected a little, then he replied: "You are right; tell me exactly what I ought to correct; I shall obey blindly. It is the first time that I have submitted my judgement to another's. "

Many criticisms were published of his "History of Italy," that of the great writer Tommaseo being the most worthy of record.

"We have here a modest work, which learned and severe historians might perhaps hardly deign to notice, but which would make a better text for the schools than certain celebrated works. Don Bosco, in a volume of moderate size, gives us the entire history of Italy in its most important phases; he knows exactly what to select and how to surround it with illuminating information. Where there is an over-abundance of matter to sift, Don Bosco shows a special aptitude for order and clearness, which, coming from a calm temperament, produce a like serenity in youthful minds. I need hardly point out that the author has not always seen his way to draw upon the results of researches made by modern science among the sources of history; but I think it necessary to add that not a few of the boasted discoveries of modern criticism are still subject to dispute, and are concerned with matters by no means essential to the truth of History; in this regard the conclusions of the Author appear to me in agreement both with the true standard of civilisation and sound morality. In the familiar language he uses for youthful minds, he treats public affairs from the point of view of individual uprightness, which is more within the general reach, and more directly productive of good."

The Minister of Education gave the book a ready welcome, and awarded it a prize of a thousand francs. He would have made it the obligatory text for the government schools, if Don Bosco had agreed to modify some passages which would be pointed out; but he would not accept such conditions. Seventy thousand copies were printed during his life time; many writers took it as a model for their own publications, and in 1881, without Don Bosco's knowledge, it was translated into English by Mr. Morell, an Inspector of Schools, and published by Longman's.

Some anti-clericals have denounced this History, as not giving sufficient prominence to the formation of national unity; but they do not notice that it was written in 1856, when that unity was

still a future historical development; that in the early re-printed editions, he brought it up to 1857, and that although he did not have the time subsequently to complete it, he furnished it with a chronological summary.

In 1883, the general map of Italy, with other maps of provinces, and those giving postal information etc. were published, and were afterwards adopted by the Post Office Authorities as official. These had not only been suggested to the Author, Sig. Marchisio, by Don Bosco, but were constructed with his assistance.

Before we leave the consideration of Don Bosco as a writer, notice should be taken of his extreme care to avoid whatever youthful minds might misinterpret, or anything from which their inexperience might lead them to draw any undesirable ideas. He gave his real sentiments, and was not seeking for pretexts or excuses in his letter of July 3rd, 1863, in regard to a passage in his "History of Italy."

"With reference to the Duke of Parma and other persons, if I have passed over in silence what was blameworthy in them, I have done so on the principle laid down by the celebrated educationalists Girard and Aporti, who recommend that, in books destined for the young, anything which would give a bad impression to their pure and noble minds should be omitted."

In his notes upon the use of Sacred History we find the following:

"In Sacred History there are some facts which would tarnish the innocence or arouse the passions of the young, if brought before them inopportunately. A book compiled for them should allow for such a danger, and omit entirely, or tactfully cover, whatever might be harmful to their innocence."

In regard to other authors, who were otherwise of great repute, he showed a similar extreme delicacy of feeling.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### HIS DISTINGUISHING VIRTUES.

SOME of Don Bosco's most characteristic virtues are so clearly displayed in his work itself, that it could not be imagined without them, and its history could not have been written without some reference to them. But there are others which stand apart from the work which he founded, so that his life's achievement might be perfectly well known, without these virtues ever coming into notice.

They must accordingly be treated separately, and that, not through any desire to embellish our account of his life, but in order to give a true and complete presentation of the man who in many ways transcends his wonderful work, and to bring to light certain essential factors in its success. The blessing of God and the assistance of the Co-operators made the work of Don Bosco so very prosperous beyond all expectation because, when means were lacking or scarce, he had in compensation more virtue than human calculations demanded.

The virtue of charity, so characteristic of him throughout his whole life, and often manifested so unexpectedly, was practised also in those minute details wherein it is more difficult, because it is unsupported by any gratification that might arise from publicity. Don Bosco displayed, under trying circumstances, a degree of patience that must be termed wonderful. Although by nature ardent and self-confident, although his abundant activity and the incredible amount of his business had long taught him the value of time, and though one would have accordingly thought he must resent any occasion of losing it, yet the command he had obtained

over himself was such, that he never even shewed himself to be in a hurry when anyone came to him, he never interrupted their account, he would repeat his answer several times to one who had not understood him, nay, he would lead them on by asking questions and by displaying the utmost interest. And often enough in the constant procession of persons who had recourse to him, there were some who were stupid and vain, but, like his adopted patron St. Francis of Sales, he regarded impatience and hurry as unpardonable.

Sometimes his humour enabled him to draw some spiritual profit from the unreasonable applications of bores. Two men once came to him to ask him to give them the numbers for a lottery. He tried to put them off, but they insisted. Then he said : " Choose these three numbers : six, ten, and fourteen. " The men thanked him, and were going off, but Don Bosco stopped them and said : " Wait a moment till I give you the explanation. " The men replied there was no need of an explanation, but when Don Bosco told them they could not be successful without it, they waited and he said : " Six represents the six Commandments of the Church ; ten represents the ten commandments of God, and fourteen is the number of the works of mercy. If you work on those numbers, you will win an eternal reward. "

But there were occasions when his sweetness and patience gave way to sterner methods, when charity itself demanded that justice should step in. He once drove out of his presence, by threatening him with violence, a man who had come to see him, but kept uttering blasphemies.

Another time, a monk, who should have been wearing his habit, came to see him dressed in secular attire. Instead of returning his greeting as an old acquaintance, Don Bosco looked at him as though he were a stranger. And when the other protested, Don

Bosco said : " Can that be you in such an attire? You had better go about your business, for I have no time to spare." The monk urged the peculiar circumstances of the times (as religious orders were being suppressed) and said he had no desire to expose himself to insults. To this Don Bosco replied : " Leave me in peace, others are waiting to see me. If you wish to have a conversation, you must come in your proper habit."

The monk then saw that Don Bosco was serious; he asked his pardon, and having promised not to lay aside his habit again, Don Bosco listened to his request.

A certain learned and pious theologian once made a mistake in supporting a case, and some religious, who had formerly held him in high esteem, now criticised him as an ignoramus. Don Bosco listened for a time, then he suggested that they should cease their criticism, for such a change of opinion in regard to a man of undoubted learning did little credit to their powers of discernment.

There is a letter of his excusing himself for not being able to accept a little boy, but instead of the touching regret he usually expressed in such cases, he gives the following rebuke : " When the mother came, she was dressed in a style that even invited me to ask her for an alms. I cannot accept a boy as being wholly destitute, when the parents can afford to dress in the height of fashion."

His natural temperament included two qualities which he sought by every means to keep in check; they were his inclination to wrath and his unusual strength. If extreme necessity demanded that, to prevent some evil, he should bring these into play, it was so much the worse for the offenders. Once during the early days of the Oratory, a whole band of big street boys came into the neighbourhood to have a fight with stones. Don Bosco was told of it, and he hastened to the spot; he saw that these reckless youths were running considerable danger, and he tried to dissuade

hem from their madness. But it was like talking to the wall. Then he saw that he could afford to waste neither time nor discretion, and he rushed upon one of the parties of roughs, and using his fists knocked several over, and the others ran away. He then made for the other party, but they took to their heels. Some one asked : " What about the risk of being hit by a stone ? " To which he replied : " I am made that way ; when I see that God is offended, I must go to stop it, even though an army were against me. "

In him who could be so overbearing and courageous when occasion demanded, who would recognise the same person blushing to the roots of his hair, if, by some absolute necessity, he was forced to speak on the delicate subjects connected with morality ? It was only under constraint that he had studied the treatises in moral theology dealing with such things. His dread of such subjects was such, that in spite of all the experiences he had to go through, he remained to the end inexperienced in these matters, so carefully had he shunned the slightest contact with them. Sometimes the method he adopted was somewhat violent. While he was a cleric, he was staying for a time in the house of a priest, and was persuaded to give his host the pleasure of some music on the violin ; but during the performance a crowd of villagers was attracted, and the music set them dancing. Now Don Bosco had always been most adverse to this sort of amusement, and when he saw that he had now inadvertently been the cause of it, he was seized with indignation against himself, smashed up the violin, and never played again from that day.

Humility and prudence, causing him always to hold himself in low esteem, combined with a firm conviction of the difficulty of advancing in virtue, had a good deal to do with the dread of sin, which he so constantly displayed, even in circumstances where there was little chance of danger.

If his advice was asked on any subject, his prudence made him require a statement of all the relevant facts, before he would venture an opinion. When he had all the circumstances before him, he would raise his eyes to heaven, and remain recollected as though he awaited the reply from above. If the case was an intricate one he took some days to consider the reply, asking the applicant to assist him in the meantime by his prayers. In the interval, he would make enquiries from various quarters, or would get Don Rua to do so. The latter writes: "In this way Don Bosco succeeded in solving the most awkward difficulties and any number of persons told me that they had been consoled or solaced in their afflictions, and freed from their embarrassments by his exceptional prudence. It was put to the test sometimes when he had to perform the office of an umpire. A serious conflict of interests had arisen between the Minister General of the Observantines and the printing firm of Signor Marietti, over the reprinting of the works of St. Bonaventure. His Holiness Leo XIII. referred the matter to the judgment of Don Bosco, who, after hearing the arguments on each side, gave a decision which was satisfactory to both.

His humility, again, not only caused him to point out frequently and to his own detriment, the share that others had had in his undertakings; it not only made him refer most readily to his lowly birth, to his lack of any academic title and of any ecclesiastical position, to the assistance that charitable persons had given him in regard to his studies, but it also made him impervious to what might be said in his favour or disfavour.

In his diary, under the date of January 31st, 1862, Don Bonetti writes: "This evening several of us were in Don Bosco's room while he had his supper, for he had been hearing confessions from five till half past nine. During it he made one of the clerics read out a letter written to him by the Bishop of Spoleto, in

which His Lordship praised him very highly, saying that, although he had not the honour of knowing him personally, yet the fame of his renown had reached him, and that he recognised in him a great zeal for the glory of God, and a truly ecclesiastical spirit. Don Francesia, who was nearly always by his side, said to him with a smile : ' Don't you feel proud at hearing such fine things ? ' To this he replied : ' Oh, I am used to hearing all sorts of things about myself ; it is just the same to me to read a letter full of praise as another full of insults. When I receive a letter of the first sort, I take the pleasant liberty of confronting it with another, full of affronts and contempt, and then I say : ' See how the judgments of men disagree ; but let them talk a little, if they will ; I am nothing more nor less than I am in God's sight. ' "

One evening the server at table told the cook to make the soup a little warmer for Don Bosco. But the cook was of a brusque disposition, and replied : " Who is Don Bosco ? He is no more than anyone else in the house ? " When Don Bosco heard this insolent reply, he calmly said : " And the cook is right. "

Some words of Cardinal Cagliero are very enlightening as to Don Bosco's spirit of penance. " I and all my companions were persuaded that he carefully prevented his mortifications and penances from appearing exteriorly, so that his life seemed to be that of a highly virtuous priest, but nothing extraordinary, and might even encourage others in the hope of imitating him. But one must consider his uncertain health, the hidden inconveniences, his detachment from earthly things, the severe poverty, especially during the first twenty-five years of the Oratory, the scarcity of food, his abstention from any diversion, solace, or amusement, the lack of all comfort, and especially the constant labours of mind and body — then it may be affirmed in all truth that Don Bosco led a life of true mortification and penance, which only those lead who have attained to a high degree of perfection. "

If he had any food that was more than usually acceptable, he generally managed to spoil it. Two of the priests who were with him at St. Francis of Assisi's Institute relate the following: "Whenever he was served at dinner or supper with soup that was better than ordinary, he would seize the decanter of water, and put in enough to make it fit for thirsty dogs after a hunt; then he would take it with apparent relish. When his companions remonstrated, he would calmly reply: "It is so hot!"

But as soon as he had a place of his own, and until he had formed a community, there was no danger of pleasing himself too much, and he could order his food as he liked. The soup was the same as poor country people make for themselves. There was the chief and only course. By his order, his mother made it on Sunday and it lasted for dinner and supper every day till Thursday. On Friday another was prepared of abstinence fare, and it lasted till the end of the week. This course was usually a pasty, and so the only preparation needed was to warm it a little. If it became somewhat sour in Summer time, a little extra water made it tolerable to the stomach. One night in 1862, he had been hearing confessions till a late hour, and when he entered the house, he found that the cook had retired some hours before and his supper had become a cold mixture. There was no means of remedying matters, so Don Bosco poured a glass of water over it and stirred it all up. Then he said to Don Francesia with a smile: "It doesn't matter much, I shall eat it with a good intention and it will be equally beneficial." And yet for those under his direction, he would not hear of any such sacrifices. He used to say: "There are plenty of means for mortifying yourself. The heat, the cold, illness, the persons around you and things that happen — all these will give you the opportunity of living a mortified life."

He forbade his boys to indulge in any severe mortification.

observing that often enough the desire for extraordinary penances comes from the evil spirit. If permission for any of these was asked, he recommended instead a careful watch over the eyes, the tongue, the will, and to be assiduous in the exercise of charity. He sometimes sanctioned the refusal of a small portion of the food allowed, but his usual advice was: "I do not recommend penances to you, but work, work!"

But even in this, he insisted upon moderation in others — it was only himself that he allowed to go to excess. In the early days of the Oratory, when he lived with his mother, he was sometimes so tired out in the evening as to go to sleep over his supper, or in the first chair he sat on, and could not be aroused till the morning. He used to say of himself: "God has given me the favour that labour and fatigue, instead of being a burden, are like a comfort and recreation." In 1885 (two years before his death) there was such a large number of important letters that he demanded an answer in his own hand, that he remained shut in his room from morning till night, for weeks together. Some one asked: "How can you remain at that tiresome work, without even taking a little fresh air?" "Because," he replied, "I do it with the greatest pleasure; there is nothing that I like more." This was his usual reply, if anyone sympathised with him.

Don Bonetti writes: "In regard to suffering, he underwent it with great joy, which appeared even in his countenance, and so he never lost an opportunity of embracing it, nor laid aside a task no matter how troublesome or laborious it might be. In fact it almost seemed that it would give him more pain to omit a disagreeable task than to perform it. If the mortification was in the cause of charity, the more readily he accepted it. Once at a gentlemen's house, he was offered a cup of coffee. He took it and drank it very willingly. He knew that both the master and the servant

would be mortified if he remarked anything, but the coffee had had salt put in it in mistake for sugar.

Don Lemoyne (his biographer) relates some singular instance of his undergoing heroic sacrifices on behalf of others, asserting that God had allowed Don Bosco to assume the illnesses of others with all the accompanying suffering.

"In the early days of the Oratory, whenever one of his boys was attacked by fever, by toothache or headache or sickness and the like, he would go to the Church and beg of God to relieve the suffering boy, and to give himself some penance instead. And he was heard. He would say to a boy who was in pain: "Never mind, I'll take a part of your suffering." This was said with a smile, but he was soon after seized with the pains of a most severe nature in head, teeth, or ears, while the boy would be perfectly cured. After some years, he found that this interfered with his work, and he determined not to undertake that sort of penance.

One day he saw a boy suffering badly from toothache. He went to him and said: "Never mind, I shall go and pray that I may have a part of your pain." The boy refused to agree, but Don Bosco persisted. That evening Don Bosco was attacked by severe toothache, which went on increasing and became so acute that he called his mother to him and said: "Do not leave me, for I fear that I might throw myself out of the window. This pain is almost turning my head."

"However, he never repented of the sacrifice nor asked God to relieve him of the tormenting pain, but underwent all the consequences of the offer he had made."

All these virtues, as coming from one heavenly source, were blended into harmony by his wonderful serenity. This was manifested as well in small annoyances as in great afflictions. "One day,"

says Don Rua : " I was to go with him by train on a journey of a few miles. We were some distance from the station, when the whistle told us that we had no time to lose. In fact we lost the train, and Don Bosco without the least ado set out to walk between the two places. He took out from his pocket an exercise-book and a pencil and was engaged with his work the whole way without once looking up. When we reached the place he quietly remarked : ' It's quite true that not all calamities are misfortunes ; if we had caught that train I could not have corrected this little work. As it is I have finished it, and can now send it to the press. '

Once his mother came to him in great distress, saying that his hassock, which had been hanging outside, was stolen. She urged him to take means to find the culprit, and showed much displeasure when he appeared to regard the theft as of no consequence. But Don Bosco told her not to be distressed. " The one who had stolen it, " he said, " probably had more need of it than I have, and if he were to come to confession to me, I would first make sure of his sincere disposition to amend, and would then make him a present of the stolen goods, and give him absolution. "

In 1856 when a new building was being put up at the Oratory, by some accident a great part of it fell down. Don Bosco was away, and when informed of it, he asked at once if anyone had been hurt. On learning that no one had been touched he said : " Thank God for that, the rest doesn't matter a bit. "

In 1857 some frauds were committed against the Oratory by one who had long professed interest in his work. One of his older boys expressed indignation at this abuse of Don Bosco's goodness, and urged that the person should be punished. Don Bosco merely replied : " You will see that God will help us to make up for it. " His young friend said that was all very well, but in the meantime the swindler had robbed Don Bosco of the money which cost so much labour to obtain ; he should be given a lesson. But Don

Bosco only added: "God will give him the lesson; we shall not bother ourselves about it further."

A far more serious wrong was done to him in 1848. While he was giving an instruction in the church, a ruffian got upon the wall and shot at him through the window. The bullet passed between Don Bosco's arm and breast, tearing his cassock, and lodging in the wall behind. The boys looked startled, they heard the crack, and then burst into a shout of alarm. Don Bosco quieted them: "Are you frightened by a badly-made joke? Some uneducated people can never make a jest without offending against good manners. See my cassock is torn and the wall is spoiled. But let us get on with our catechism."

After the instruction there were Vespers and Benediction, and not till after that did Don Bosco join the boys in the playground. There was a regular scene. Shouting, hurraing, tears of joy etc. Don Bosco, after a few minutes, said: "If Our Lady had not made him miss his aim I should have been struck in the heart. But I am sorry for the torn cassock for it is the only one I have."

The police tried in vain to discover the culprit. Don Bosco himself was the only one who had an idea of his identity; and when he met him one day he made him confess it and forgave him.

Perhaps the severest of all his trials was one to which we have already referred. It was the long but fruitless antagonism on the part of His Grace, Archbishop Gastaldi, who although a very excellent man in many respects, yet opposed the Salesian Society, both before and after its definitive constitution. Don Bosco never experienced sadder days; and all during them he calmly paid all due respect to the authority and person of his opponent, with a constancy which achieved its purpose. His rule of guidance was: "I defend myself, I never accuse others."

Augustus Alfani in his book entitled *Battles and Victories* will be considered to have justly made Don Bosco the model of Christian fortitude.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### DON BOSCO CONSIDERED APART FROM HIS INSTITUTE.

ONE of the drawbacks attaching to men who belong to particular institutes or who have founded them, is the risk of being so wrapped up in their interests that they can see no reason, nor possibility of doing good, apart from them. This is to abuse the efficacy of what is called the spirit of the Institute in question. It is so easy for him who has discovered a worthy and effective instrument, to put it forward as the only one, and even to make little of the benefits, if they should be obtained by other means. Only solid virtue can fully check this disposition.

Don Bosco could inspire confidence in the special work confided to him, by his sympathy with, and cordial support of, every good work no matter how initiated. It was a quality which brought him into the happiest relations with the founders or directors of many celebrated and pious undertakings, and is therefore worthy of some consideration.

This disposition of his character, which led him to very active exertions outside his own circle, was in fact based upon the high conception he had formed of the mission confided to him and to his Co-operators. As the Salesian Society was not to be limited in the extent of its influence — witness the mission to the savages and the care of emigrants — neither should it be limited in regard to the material it worked upon. It is true that its main object is the education of the young, but other works tending to spiritual profit are not alien to it. And as Don Bosco gave example before precept, so all through his life there is a remarkable readiness to go beyond the work of the Oratory in order to achieve some

ulterior good, and to add his endeavours to those of others in its realisation.

This tendency is seen in such incidents as those related about his interest in the barber's boys, and much the same happened in regard to the cab-drivers who took him sometimes on his journeys. Whenever he was seen to seat himself beside the driver, it was the sign that a little discourse on spiritual matters had begun, and at a certain stage he would take the reins, while the driver made his confession.

He exercised a special apostolate on behalf of the sick, particularly if they were badly disposed in regard to the interests of their souls, or were in the company of those who did not desire the presence of a priest. In both cases he took the utmost care not to restrict anyone's liberty; but once he had made sure that the sick person desired spiritual help, he left no effort untried till he had obtained an entrance to them.

As early as 1845, when means were very scanty, he expended a sufficient sum to have a course of lessons in German, so that he might be able to give the consolation of the Sacraments to the German soldiers, who had then joined the Sardinian army in considerable numbers.

There was a new clientele for his charitable offices in 1849 and in 1860 when many political exiles were in Turin. One who had been a lawyer was the object of particular care on the part of Don Bosco. He was reduced to giving little displays in the Piazza San Carlo with some canaries trained to do simple tricks. His misfortune, and the remembrance of the time when he (Don Bosco) had given public shows as a boy, drew them together, and when some evil-minded person poisoned the canaries, the poor lawyer became a special object of Don Bosco's charity.

We have seen what an uncompromising opponent he was of all the sectarians, and how bitter they were towards him. Yet

in regard to their personal relations he was the essence of charity. In November 1854 the Waldensian Minister, De Sanctis, had a dispute with his colleagues. He was accordingly deprived of his benefice by the authorities of the sect. Don Bosco wrote to him as follows: "For some time past I have thought of writing to you, to assure you of my great desire to meet you, and to offer you all that a sincere friend has at his command. I have come to this resolution through a careful reading of your books, by which I seemed to perceive the restlessness of your heart and mind.

"Judging by what has appeared in the papers you seem to be in disagreement with the Waldenses, and I venture to offer you hospitality at my house, whenever you may please to accept it, so that you may be free to carry out whatever you may be inspired to do by God. A room will be at your disposal as well as our poor fare....."

To this De Sanctis replied: "I never thought to receive such generous and considerate treatment, from one who is my adversary. Let us make no mystery about it: you are in conflict with my religious tenets as I am with yours, but while you oppose, you show a sincere regard, and hold out a benevolent hand in a moment of affliction; thus you show that you know how to practise that Christian charity, about which so many know how to theorise..."

His apostolic zeal and charity sometimes led him to make strange acquaintances, who would hardly be generally acceptable. One day as he was leaving the prison, he went by mistake into a room where there was a man and his wife and daughter, who, at seeing Don Bosco, and hearing his hearty salutation, seemed to be thunderstruck. Don Bosco immediately grasped the situation, and said:

"I am very tired and should very much like a cup of coffee;

could you give me one?" The whole family together expressed their eagerness to do so, and the daughter ran off to prepare it. The man stood looking at the priest in surprise, and presently said with evident emotion: "But, Don Bosco, do you know in whose house you are?"

"Indeed I do; in the house of a worthy man."

"Then do you really mean to come to visit the public executioner?"

"I know that you are a good Christian, and that is enough for me." This was quite true, for whenever there was an execution, the man used to send an offering to the church near by, so that a Mass might be said for the condemned person. Not having been accustomed to consideration from anyone of note, the poor man was much moved at this charity of Don Bosco, and placed everything he had at his disposal. Don Bosco sat down, and the coffee arrived with a cup for one person; but he told them to bring another as the good man would have a cup of coffee with him. The executioner demurred, saying: "Am I to take coffee with so distinguished a person?" But the second cup was brought. Don Bosco filled it and offered it to the man, who could hardly swallow the coffee on account of his emotion.

After this visit, the executioner used to go often to the Church at the Oratory for the services, until being recognised and remarked upon by the people he went elsewhere. Occasionally he could be seen in the street near by, as though taking a look by stealth at the house of Don Bosco. His son was a very good boy and attended the Sunday school at the Oratory. In fact he wished to enter religion, but when he learned that his father's work constituted an impediment, he fell sick, rapidly declined and Don Bosco assisted him on his death-bed.

Well-known and much admired was Don Bosco's charity during the cholera of 1850. In his own neighbourhood, and in one parish,

there were eight hundred cases, and five hundred deaths. Don Bosco had prayed that God would strike the shepherd and spare the flock; but out of regard to the young lives for whom he was responsible, he took every precaution against infection. He gathered the boys together on August 5th and gave them instructions as to how to avoid infection, and having taken all possible means for their safety, he went out to assist the victims. His mother was his usual restraint in danger, but on this occasion she said: "It is your duty to go." There was great scarcity of nurses and assistants; so after taking advice, he put the case before the oldest of his boys, pointing out the generous sacrifice to be made, and the need of helpers; fourteen offered themselves on the first day, and thirty others a little later. They were instructed in their work by Don Bosco and were most successful in assisting the sick and dying. Moreover, Don Bosco took charge of the school opened by the Mayor for the orphan boys, and after the epidemic he took fifty to the Oratory, for which act of public generosity he received the heartfelt thanks of the municipality.

Not one of the boys who had volunteered as infirmarians was attacked by the cholera — although Don Bosco himself was. He came in one evening with all the symptoms, but told no one, not even his mother. He set about applying remedies, and having induced a heavy perspiration, the symptoms had gone by the morning. He had not been so fortunate in 1845, when he had assisted at the outbreak of spotted fever. He took the illness and it left him with painful eruptions all during his life — although he never mentioned anything about it. Parts of his body were found all inflamed after his death.

But his charity was not confined to individuals, nor to certain sections of people; it was displayed towards recognised Institutes, which were quite different from his own. When the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul was established in Turin, Don Bosco

supported it with all his might, and effectively defended it, when it was the object of an antagonistic political intrigue. At the general annual meeting he went to give the discourse for the occasion, which dealt with the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, a subject with which he was thoroughly conversant. He ceased to go when it seemed to him that they were beginning to regard his coming with too much distinction.

He very willingly sent his clerics and priests to give help at the Sunday Oratories that were founded by others, especially during the busy time of Lent. It was his express wish, that his sons should give whatever assistance they could to the parish priest, in whose district their schools might be.

When he had educated boys for his own work, and they expressed a desire to go elsewhere, he gave them every liberty. Canon Berone writes: "While Don Bosco sought to draw young men to his own work, and to adapt them gradually to the life of a religious society, he was never insistent upon it, he never sought to impose a vocation, he never exerted pressure, or allowed others to exert pressure upon the boys to draw them to his work, but left them absolutely free in their choice."

Don Reviglio adds: "When Don Bosco saw that certain clerics had no desire to remain and join his society, but nevertheless had a vocation to the priesthood, he took every means to enable them to be prepared, rejoicing in being able to increase the number of good priests, of whom there was then grave need." Others give the same testimony.

What he particularly desired was that real vocations should be protected and fostered: He writes: "Let us remember that when we cultivate a vocation, it is giving a great treasure to the Church; whether this priest goes into the Diocese, or to the Missions, or into a religious order, we need not consider; it is always an immense benefit to the Church of Jesus Christ. Never

hesitate to receive a boy who shows promise of a true vocation, on the score of lack of means. Spend all that you have upon it, and if necessary go and beg for it, and if after that you are still without the means, do not despair; the Blessed Virgin will come to your aid even miraculously."

Lastly, although much of his labour was in connection with the finding of money for his works, he was very generous, when occasion demanded, towards other enterprises. Passing mention may be made of his extreme charity towards the mothers and sisters of his associates; it was a further expression of his own regard for family affection, and though not exactly an example of charity towards outsiders, it is a further proof of how wide could be the limits to which his charity would go.

In 1863 a new church was being built in the suburb of San Salvatio, and a public appeal was made for funds. There was great need for this church, and it was just the work to appeal to Don Bosco. He took no heed of his own necessities, and sent to the priest in charge all he had, two hundred francs, and took many tickets for the lottery which was opened on behalf of the new church.

More frequent and important were the considerable offerings made to the Pope whenever he went to Rome. His first offering was that memorable gift from his poor boys — thirty-five francs — sent to Rome in 1849, the first year that Peter's Pence was collected in Italy. It was an affirmation of his ready adherence to the practice revived in our times, by which the bond between the faithful and the Holy See is strengthened by sacrifice; but by his offering to this central and universal fund, he also announced his intention of making his own work participate in every endeavour on behalf of religion.

## CHAPTER XX.

### VISIONS AND PREVISIONS.

THOSE that knew Don Bosco long and intimately are generally of the opinion that his portraits do not give a full or true impression of his countenance. His features are there, no doubt, but they are only the material part of his aspect; it has been impossible to catch the power of his look, which varied according to circumstances between the extreme limits of great attraction and of inspiring fear. It was usually penetrating, so that his boys often felt that he could read their hearts — and this was confirmed by the fact that consciences were often as clear to him as an open book.

At times this acuteness was the result of his unique experience in guiding souls. In the early days of the Oratory, the Archbishop of Turin charged him to make an enquiry about a woman at a little place called Viù. She was a good woman, and in fact was reputed to be, and was called by the people a *Saint*. He went there with a friend, who was to keep a careful account of what happened. They found her surrounded by a circle of admirers, but Don Bosco came along quite casually and asked her to give him a few moments private conversation. The woman was piqued by his behaviour, and had a general idea that it was a sort of threat. She stood up and said with a tragic voice and air; "I prefer to speak in public, and so that all can hear and see what I do. I do not believe in artifice; I prefer the *Aye, aye* and the *No, No*, of the Gospel."

"Very naturally," said Don Bosco, "I respect your judgment and your interpretation of the Scripture; but would you kindly give me a moment, as I have something to say to your interest."

She at last agreed against her will. They went into a room at the side, and Don Bosco managed that his friend should be in a position to hear. Don Bosco quietly asked :

"How long have you played this game of a deceiver and hypocrite?"

"Is it I that you call a deceiver and a hypocrite?"

"I do indeed, for by misusing the name of God, you deceive the people with your evil practices."

Then the woman became excited and burst out in angry and insulting words, but Don Bosco cut her short, and said with a genial smile :

"I had no intention of insulting you; I have been sent to make sure whether you are a saint or not. Your want of humility has completely convinced me that your sanctity is a fiction, and I tell you so in the name of the Archbishop who has sent me."

The woman was entirely confounded. Then Don Bosco changed his manner; he described to her the state of her conscience, in which she agreed, and with all charity suggested a method of breaking off her conferences to the people without loss of her reputation. She was deeply moved; she accepted his advice and promised to follow it, and in fact disappeared from the place without any ill reports being spread.

But in the majority of cases — and hundreds are witnesses to it — no art, or previous experience could account for the manner in which he read the hearts of others. Boys of a timid or troubled conscience who went to confession to him, instead of revealing their faults, asked him to tell them what they were, and he would show them exactly what they had on their conscience. Sometimes in the morning when he went into the sacristy and found it too full of boys waiting to go to confession, he would turn to several and say : "You do not need to go to confession; you can go to Communion without it." Once he met a boy on the stairs and asked

him: "When are you going to make that general confession that is so necessary?" "I went the day before yesterday," replied the boy. "Ah yes, but you made it badly; — you did not tell everything." The boy became confused and began to cry.

Don Bosco once remarked in all frankness that these revelations came to him generally in the morning. While he was hearing one penitent, he would have a clear prevision of what the others were going to tell him. This he said as though regretting it, for if he heard confessions in the evening, it took him a longer time and many who wished to go to confession would have to go away.

Once when a certain person was spoken of who had left the Oratory, and had not turned out well, he said: "If I could have a talk to him, I think I could help him, for I know exactly the present state of his soul."

Sometimes he saw what was happening elsewhere. Signor Bocca once accompanied him on a journey, and they were absent from the Oratory for some days. While travelling Signor Bocca heard him exclaim: "Why! Barretta and Costa (two of the assistants at the Sunday Oratory) have not gone to the Oratory! and why is Don Carpano thus engaged when he ought to be at his post!" When they went back to Turin, the gentleman verified these little disorders as having happened on the day, and at the time Don Bosco had spoken.

At other times when he was at prayer, or writing, or at dinner or in the midst of the boys, he would call one of his trusted assistants and send him to stop something that was going on elsewhere: "Go to such and such a room, there are three boys there (giving their names) and tell them to come out." Or again: "Go to the assistants and say that there are certain boys hidden away in such a place and that he must tell them to come out." Or again: "Go up the stairs: you will find so and so. Tell them that Don Bosco is quite aware of what is going on."

On some occasions, distance made no difference to his power of reading consciences. The Count of Camburzano, the well-known member of Parliament, relates that he was at a gathering of persons of distinction, and the talk turned upon Don Bosco. A certain lady said: "I will believe in him when he can tell me the state of my conscience without knowing me." Those listening wished to put it to the test. The lady was absolutely unknown to Don Bosco, even by name, but she wrote a few lines there and then, asking for this revelation of the state of her conscience. The Count above mentioned sent a message with it, asking for a few words of comfort for this widowed lady who was subject to many afflictions. Don Bosco replied to the Count that the lady was not a widow at all, but separated from her husband; and to the lady he suggested that she should take steps to be reconciled to her husband, and to make a good confession after twenty years of making bad ones. The lady herself revealed this, for she was so struck by the truth that Don Bosco had somehow come to know.

Don Bosco himself said that sometimes these things were revealed to him in dreams. Once he dreamt that a large number of the boys at the Oratory were covered with wounds, varying according to their faults. After some months he mentioned this dream and said: "On the one hand I did not wish to give any heed to it, and on the other it seemed to me a matter of importance. Having considered it well, I called one of the boys whom I had seen in the dream, and questioned him about his conscience. He confessed that it was exactly as I related; the same happened with two others, so that I had no longer any doubt that I knew the state of all the boys.

During his sleep his visions were very frequent. Don Lemoyne in one of his many biographical volumes says: "The name of *Don Bosco* and the word *dreams* are almost correlative, and if I were not to mention them in these pages, all the former boys

would rightly demand where they were. And in fact this phenomenon, recurring almost continually for sixty years was very remarkable. After a long day of much thought, full of labours and plans, as soon as he laid his head on the pillow, he entered a new region of ideas and scenes, which remained with him till dawn. This continual transition from the ideal to the real would have turned the brain of any ordinary man.

The school boys at Chieri had named him "the dreamer." They relate that once a passage was read out to be put into Latin, and John translated it there and then. On being asked how he knew it so well, he said he had dreamt the night before that the master would give that passage, and he had prepared it in the morning. They relate also that on another day when the master had dictated half a passage, John translated the whole extract. His explanation was the same. He had dreamt the whole passage.

However, his chief dreams were on the subject of his destiny and his work. At nine years of age, as we have pointed out, he learnt in a dream what his future mission would be; at sixteen he was assured that the means would be forthcoming; at nineteen that he had no right to refuse to undertake the task appointed him; at twenty-one, what class of boys he would chiefly have to deal with; at twenty-two, the great city of Turin where his mission would be first established. When his work had been partly accomplished, and other visions had made him regard this sort of instruction as the normal thing, he dreamt that he was in the middle of a piazza, where he saw an unknown person turning round a large wheel. He was told that every turn represented ten years of the Oratory; during the first revolution it seemed to him that only himself and a few others heard the noise; during the second all Piedmont; during the third, the whole of Italy; during the fourth all Europe; and during the fifth, all the world.

However, the majority of readers are not in a position to investigate these extraordinary visions, and may be in some doubt as to their complete authenticity; they may also think that although they were believed by Don Bosco, and in all humility, yet they do not refer to events which were independent of him, and are not as clear in regard to future events as they might be. For this class of persons it will be well to add some previsions of his, whether in sleep or not, which had abundant witnesses when they were announced, and equally strong testimony when they were verified.

On August 31st, 1844, the wife of the Portuguese Minister went to confession to him, and Don Bosco said: "Pray to your Guardian Angel to keep you safe from the danger which you will fall into to-day." The lady asked for further explanations, and was anxious and even vexed when she could obtain none. In the afternoon of that day, while she was in a carriage near the city of Turin, the horses became uncontrollable, and overturned the carriage into a ditch. The lady was in the greatest danger, but she had prayed as Don Bosco told her to do, and she escaped unhurt.

In 1855, while he was at table with several clerics, young Cardinal Cagliero (1) among them, he suddenly said: "One of you will be a bishop; so will others of my sons, but only one of those here." Cardinal Cagliero himself relates: "In the early years of my priesthood I met Don Bosco at the foot of the stairs, and saw that he was tired. Half in jest I said: 'Give me your hand, Don Bosco, I am able to help you!' He did so, and when we reached the top I perceived that he was going to kiss my right hand. I drew it back immediately, but it was too late. Then I said: "Do you mean by that act to humiliate yourself, or me?"

"Neither one nor the other," he replied, "but you will understand the meaning of it at the proper time."

(1) He was raised to the Cardinalate at the Consistory of December 1915, and was the first Salesian Bishop and Cardinal.

In 1883 Don Bosco went a step further in the matter. When about to go France he made a will, and left souvenirs for each member of the Superior Chapter. He gave Cardinal Cagliero a sealed box and said: "This is for you!" Some days later the recipient was curious enough to open the box and found inside a precious ring. Finally in October 1884, when Don Cagliero was elected Titular Bishop of Magida, he asked Don Bosco to give him particulars of the prophecy made thirty years before. He promised to do so on the eve of his episcopal consecration. When that day arrived, Don Bosco was alone with him in his room and said "Do you remember the grave illness you had when you were a boy beginning your studies?"

"I remember it very well. You had come to give me the last Sacraments, but you did not administer them; you said that I should be cured and go far, far away; but you told me nothing in particular."

"Very well, listen....." and he went on to say that he had then foreseen that I should be the leader of his missionaries, and his first Bishop.

One day he was out walking, accompanied by a young priest. Suddenly Don Bosco said: "You are the one I told fifteen years ago that you would be a priest." "That is so," replied the other, "but at that time I was quite adverse to that idea, and for a long while I ridiculed what you had said."

However many of Don Bosco's previsions were of a sad nature and foretold someone's death.

In March 1854 he narrated to the boys a dream he had had. He had seen one of them with an illumination around his head, and over it a crescent moon and the number twenty-two. A person near by told him that the boy whose head was thus illumined would die at the twenty-second moon.

He said no more, but as the months went by he told the young

leric Cagliero to keep a careful watch, particularly at night, over certain room at the Oratory. Later on, he had his bed removed to where he could be near at hand to four or five boys, of whom he had particular spiritual care. Later on still, he told Cagliero to give special notice to a certain boy, who was then seventeen years of age and in the most robust health. Quite suddenly this boy fell ill, and died a happy death on December 24th, 1855 on the day of the twenty-second moon. "You now see," said Don Bosco to the assistant why I told you not to lose sight of him." He was the first boy who died at the Oratory.

At the end of the year 1858 he said to a group of boys :

"See that you all do your utmost to pass the year 1859 in the grace of God, for perhaps it will be the last for one of you. In fact I will go so far as to say that one of you will be called to eternity before Lent is over."

While he was saying this he kept his hand on the head of the boy nearest to him, who was a lad of great promise. This boy looked up and said : "Will it be I?" Don Bosco made no answer.

"I understand," said the young boy, whose name was Magone, "that I must be prepared to die; very well; I shall hold myself in readiness." The companions laughed, but young Magone went several times to Don Bosco to ask if his time was near. Don Bosco put him off at first with a joke, but at last gave him to understand that it was. The boy was momentarily perturbed, and on seeing that, Don Bosco regretted having told him, and resolved never to reveal who was the object of his previsions if they foretold death. Magone soon recovered his good spirits, and went about his ordinary school life for the next three days in good health. On the Wednesday he was slightly ill, and grew worse till Friday, January 21st, 1859; that evening he died.

But to the general surprise, Don Bosco announced on January 25th, that he had not thought of Magone at all when he had spoken

of the approaching death; another one was meant. And he added: "That will happen within a month. Is it to be myself? or is it one of you? Let us be ready."

One of the boys named Berardi who was as well as could possibly be, surprised everyone by saying: "Then it must be my turn," and he approached Don Bosco to ask if it were he, but could get no reply from him. They were all in such good health that after some days they went about saying: "This time Don Bosco is mistaken." But on February 8th during class time Berardi turned to his companion and asked: "What is this have on my lip?" It was a little pimple; it developed rapidly into a tumour or carbuncle and after two days he died. It was during the month foretold, and Lent was not yet over.

On October 12th, 1862 he was at Vignale with a few boys. While they were out with him he said: "Let us kneel down and say a prayer for one of your companions who will die to-night." As they got up one of them said: "That is a fine way to enliven our walk!" Don Bosco replied: "But I do not mean any of you here, I am referring to a boy at the Oratory." The post brought nothing that day, and there was no telegraph. However next morning before Mass he asked for a *De Profundis* for the one who had died in the Oratory that night. In fact by referring to the list of those who have died at the Oratory, we find that a boy named Rosario did die there on that day.

About that time he announced that a boy would die after several months. Those that heard him foretell this urged him to write the name in secret. He refused to do so, but afterwards consented. He wrote the name on a paper, and having sealed the envelope gave it to a trustworthy person to keep. In the meanwhile, two other boys died before the time mentioned by him, so the envelope was not opened; but at the end of the period indicated a third boy died; the envelope was then opened in the presence of several

witnesses, among them being Don Rua, and there was found written the name *Marchisio*, which was the name of the last boy who died.

According to the testimony of a great number of witnesses, there was not a death at the Oratory between 1860 and 1880 that Don Bosco had not announced beforehand in terms that were afterwards clearly fulfilled.

In Don Ruffino's diary, under the date of February 10th, 1860, he has written the following: To-day Don Bosco said to the boy Francis Dalmazzo — "You will live forty-nine years, you will receive the clerical habit and will stay at the Oratory. After my death you will be made a Canon." So it happened. Don Dalmazzo became Rector of the Seminary at Catanzaro; he was born on July 18th, 1845, and died on March 10th, 1895.

In 1900 Don Belmonte said to a confrère, Don Cogliolo: "I have only one more year of life for Don Bosco told me I should live fifty-seven years." He was born on September 8th, 1843 and died of meningitis on February 18th, 1901.

But the most famous of all was his prevision in November 1854. He dreamt that a valet in the royal palace cried out to tell him that there would be a great funeral at the Court. When he awoke, he thought of writing to King Victor Emmanuel to tell him of his dream. On the fifth night afterwards he dreamt the same thing again, but this time the valet did not say a great funeral, but great funerals. Then Don Bosco wrote to the King explaining his dream. His Majesty became furious and sent the Marquis Fassati to ask what he meant by disturbing the mind of his sovereign in that way. Don Bosco replied: "But suppose what I have written turns out to be true!" In the meantime the Countess Anfossi had been asked by Don Bosco to speak to the two queens on behalf of the Oratory. After some days the lady told Don Bosco that she had not yet had an opportunity of speaking to the royal ladies, but she hoped to do so soon. Don Bosco seemed to doubt that

she would. The Countess asked him why, and he replied : " You will not see the two queens again. " The dream occurred in November 1854. In the early days of January 1855, Queen Maria Teresa who was fifty-four, and Queen Maria Adelaide who was thirty-three, both died quite suddenly. Nor were these the only " great funerals at Court, " for a few days later the infant child of the King, and the Duke of Genoa both passed away.

When the present Superior General, Don Albera, was elected to his office — Don Rinaldi (one of the members of the Superior Chapter) opened a letter remarking that it contained a precious document. Reading it, he said that on November 22nd, 1877, there was a feast-day kept at St. Charles' College at Borgo San Martino. The Bishop was at table with Don Bosco and some other guests, and the conversation turned upon a young cleric, Paul Albera, whose desire to become a Salesian was opposed by his parish priest and by the Archbishop. Mgr. Ferrè asked Don Bosco if the young cleric would overcome their opposition. Don Bosco replied : "*Don Albera has not only overcome those difficulties, but he will overcome many others and will be my second...*" He did not complete the sentence in an audible tone, but passing his hand across his brow, as though he saw a far-off vision, he said : "*Oh, yes, Don Albera will be of great service to us.*"

Don Rinaldi then went on to say that he had never forgotten the day and the circumstances, and that he had always been convinced that Don Albera would be the second successor of Don Bosco. In fact before the death of Don Rua seemed to be near, he had recorded these events in writing so that the prophecy might not be lost, and had acquainted several Salesians with it, including the Secretary General, Don Lemoyne.

Don Bosco himself had once been the object of a prevision. Just after his ordination he went to visit the *Piccola Casa*. The Venerable Cottolengo took hold of his cassock and said : " The

stuff your cassock is made of is too light. You want something stronger and heavier, so that the boys may pull it about without tearing it. A time will come when it will be pulled about by great numbers." When this was said by the Ven. Cottolengo, Don Bosco had not begun any work on behalf of boys.

However, the wonderful occurrences in Don Bosco's life are by no means all connected with visions or previsions. There are many others quite external to himself and exercised in a manner still more mysterious. Anyone who has visited the Oratory at all frequently must have heard, for example, of the grey dog which appeared during the early years of the Oratory, whenever a warning against danger was needed, or in order to protect Don Bosco from it. No one knew whence it came or whither it went. Others will tell you of the church bells that rang out when Don Bosco entered the village, and yet no one had touched the ropes; or again you will hear of the money which he needed to buy a chalice, and he found it in a box, to which no one but himself could possibly have had access.

But other cases are even more authoritatively attested. In the early days of his priesthood Don Bosco was near the Porta Palazzo, and finding a crowd around him, he began to speak on some religious topic. A man named Botta called out that that was not the place for sermons. When Don Bosco answered that it would do him good to listen, the man replied that he would never do so, not even if he were to be struck blind for refusing. A moment afterwards the man asked a companion why he had gone so far away. The other replied: "Why, I am standing here close to you." Then Botta rubbed his eyes and called out in tones of fear and pain: "Oh, God, I am blind, I cannot see anything." All were terrified, and the people crowded around Don Bosco and besought him to give back his sight. Botta was already on his

knees. Don Bosco replied : " Very well, pray and repent, and go at once to Confession. " While all the people prayed, Don Bosco went off. They took Botta to a church, where he went to Confession and when he received absolution his sight was restored.

A short time after that, a feast-day was being kept at the Oratory, and there were about six hundred and fifty boys to go to Communion. Don Bosco began the Mass, thinking that there were enough Hosts in the tabernacle. In reality there were only a few, and the Sacristan had forgotten to put out another ciborium to be consecrated, nor did he remember it till after the Consecration, when it was too late. When Don Bosco took the ciborium out of the tabernacle and saw that it contained only a few Hosts, he was somewhat confused; then he raised his eyes to heaven, and turning round, went to the Altar-rails and gave Communion. The whole of the six hundred and more boys went to the rails. The Hosts lasted out till every boy had received Holy Communion. The fact was general knowledge immediately afterwards. On October 18th, 1863, Don Bosco was questioned about it. He agreed that it was so, and instead of referring to its wonderful character he spoke of the Divine goodness towards them.

In 1860 a young boy named Davico was taken seriously ill, and appeared to be at death's door. Don Bosco was not at home, but on his arrival the Prefect went to him and told him to hurry, if he wished to see the boy alive. Don Bosco did not hurry at all, and answered : " Oh no, Davico will not die; I have not yet given him a pass-port. " He went to the bed and whispered a word or two to the boy who was delirious. Then he made the attendants kneel down and asked them to pray to Dominic Savio (a former pupil) to intercede for the boy. A moment afterwards Davico sat up and said to the amazement of all : " I am cured. " " Very well " said Don Bosco, " come and have supper with me. " The attendants thought it madness; but Don Bosco said : " Dominic

Savio does not do things by halves." The boy got up and went down to supper, and was quite well.

Don Dalmazzo relates that in that same year, 1860, the bread ran short and word was sent to Don Bosco; but as he was hearing Confessions, the messenger could not speak to him and the time was getting on. At last Don Bosco made a sign to the messenger, and said: "Put the bread into the basket, and in a moment I will come and give it out myself." When he had finished with the boy who had been kneeling by his side, he got up and came to give out the little loaves. He stood at the basket which contained about fifteen of these rolls, and gave one to each boy as he went by. About four hundred received one each, and afterwards the basket contained the same number as at the beginning of the distribution.

Don Rua says:

"When I was attending the Christian Brothers' schools in Turin in 1849, Don Bosco used to come there to hear Confessions and preach. On one occasion he related that a boy named Charles who had died, came back to life at the command of his confessor, and having received absolution passed again into eternity. Don Bosco said nothing as to who the confessor was, but later on I heard the occurrence attributed to Don Bosco himself. When I was a priest, or near the time of my ordination, I was very much in his confidence, so I took an opportunity of asking him if he was the confessor to whom the experience happened. He replied: "I have never said that it was one of my experiences." I did not wish to push the matter further as it appeared to be an abuse of my position. He repeated this story many times, both at the Oratory and elsewhere. He never made any reference to himself, or to anyone by name, or indicated any place in connection with it — but always related it in the same way and gave the same circumstances, as though they had made a profound impression on his memory. However, one evening in 1882, he unknowingly

gave the secret away. He was relating this fact to the boys at Borgo San Martino, after the night prayers. He was extremely tired, and half-way through the story he suddenly changed from the third person to the first, saying : *I went into the room, I said to him, he answered me.....* He kept on in the first person for some time and then returned again to the third. His Biographer, Don Lemoyne was present, and heard this slip of the tongue, which we all regarded as providential.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### DON BOSCO'S CONNECTION WITH PERSONS AND EVENTS IN HISTORY.

**I**N connection with various incidents already related, we have found Don Bosco having dealings with men who were already famous or who became so afterwards. It will be suitable, however, to deal with several occurrences of this sort in a separate chapter, both because they happened apart from his apostolate, and because they constituted important public events, particularly when they concerned men who were in the anti-clerical movement.

After the year 1848, political questions and developments were such, that it became a most rare thing for Catholic priests to have any dealings with the supporters of the new regime. In fact we may go so far as to say that this small number was reduced to one — Don Bosco alone — taking into consideration, that is, only those priests who, like him, on account of their devotion to the opposite political principles and authority, and who actually kept apart from politics, were suspected sometimes of being deeply concerned in anti-liberal movements.

The meeting and the contrast between these remarkable men will not only reveal a living element in the recent history of Italy, but it will also throw further illumination upon the character of Don Bosco and of the famous people in question. This will be possible to an even greater extent when his complete life is written, for then these dealings with celebrated men will appear far more numerous than can now be recorded.

In 1848 he had occasion to meet the Minister, Signor Gioberti, who was then President of the Council. He was accompanied by his friend, Don Borel, who had been a school-fellow of Gioberti.

They were received with every mark of welcome and respect. The discourse soon turned upon the minister's recent journey to Rome, upon the Pope, and the independence of Italy, and Gioberti was not too respectful towards Pope Pius IX., throwing suspicions upon his sincerity and his love for Italy, and complaining that his intentions were wrapped in too much obscurity.

Don Bosco was not silent under these circumstances. Frankly, but with courtesy, he upheld the Holy Father's position, and although Gioberti was equally courteous, his sentiments made Don Bosco leave the interview with sad thoughts. Some of his friends were waiting at the Oratory, anxiously expecting an account of the meeting. Don Bosco told them what had happened, and said in conclusion: "Gioberti will end badly, for he dares to censure the action of the Holy See."

Some months afterwards, Gioberti was already repudiated by his party, deprived of his position in the government, and had lost all the honours for which he had made such sacrifices. Don Bosco went again to see him with Don Borel, thinking that a kind word would be acceptable. It was an awkward position to face, but he did not hesitate. He reminded the former minister of the hopes placed in him, when he had proposed to make Piedmont intervene on behalf of the restoration of Rome, and besought him to give the Holy Father the consolation — and himself the merit — of yielding to the decree of the Index, which had condemned some of his books. Gioberti took no offence, but, in a tone that admitted of no reply, he said: "My retraction consists in my not answering; my silence is enough." Thus the visit was of little avail.

In 1850, a friend of Don Bosco's, Signor Volpato, advised him to place the Oratory to some extent under the protection of the government. Don Bosco would not agree. Sig. Volpato then took it upon himself to apply to the Senate in Don Bosco's name for a subsidy from the Government. Before recommending this appli-

zation, the Senate sent a commission of three gentlemen to make a visit to the Oratory and to report upon its work. The visit was made, and when it was over Count Sclopis said in the name of all :

" You will not suspect me of being given to flattery, but I must frankly confess that we are perfectly satisfied with our visit ; we have nothing but praise for your work, and wish it all success."

In the subsequent meeting of the Senate, although there was some opposition, the request was partially agreed to, so that Don Bosco's work had a sort of official recognition.

In the same year, 1850, Don Bosco was staying with Rosmini at Stresa, and went with him one day to see Signora Bolongaro, who was at her country-house near by. There were about thirty guests, among them such well known men as Tommaseo, Grossi, Bonghi and Luigi Farini who had just published his history of the Roman States. Don Bosco had read this history, but had never met the author, nor did he know that he was in the company. The discussion turned upon political affairs and the opinions were not such as to meet with the approval of Don Bosco or Rosmini. The latter tried to restrain one of the speakers by remarking to him privately that Don Bosco was by his side, but this gentleman, in the heat of the discussion, replied with some disrespectful remark. Don Bosco did not pretend to hear it, and later on when the new history came under discussion, Rosmini asked him to give his opinion. He did not let the chance go by. He spoke without excitement, but without fear, and all listened with great interest, while he observed that Farini's history would need a long discussion and should be blamed for much inaccuracy, and for the dishonour which he threw upon the temporal power. He cited passages from it as though he knew it almost by heart. Farini listened in silence while the bystanders rather relished the occurrence ; but presently someone asked Don Bosco if he knew Farini, and when he replied in the negative, they introduced him.

Don Bosco was a little surprised, but not disconcerted in the least. He saluted the author of the History; he said he had no intention of offering him any offence, but that he could withdraw nothing of what he had said, and in fact went on to point out some other serious errors he had made.

The company thought that Farini would be displeased and would defend himself. But he welcomed the criticism and thanked Don Bosco saying :

" It is evident that you are thoroughly acquainted with historical matters; your frankness is a pleasure; no one has ever pointed out such things to me. "

Rosmini was surprised at Don Bosco's courage, and afterward said he would not have dared to say so much to Farini.

In 1852 Don Bosco was out with his boys for a walk, when he noticed in the street a gentleman of striking aspect who had stopped to look at the boys. Don Bosco was attracted by his unaccustomed gaze and approached to ask if he were not well, and if he could do anything for him. The man appreciated the spirit in which the offer was made, and admitted that he had had nothing to eat for some time. Don Bosco besought him to come home with him, and thus there sat down to table together, Don Bosco and his mother and the famous Francesco Crispi. He was then in the utmost necessity, after leaving Sicily, and he had Don Bosco's hospitality for some six weeks, during which he often opened his mind to the priest. He had a lowly lodging in Turin, and Don Bosco frequently sent things to him there, among them a pair of new shoes. Crispi was most grateful to Don Bosco; he confided to him the secrets of his heart, and often went to spend feast-days at the Oratory. In later years when his fame was world-wide, and he had become prime minister of Italy, he did not think it beneath him to refer to those times of need, and never forgot the debt he owed to the Oratory.

Don Bosco had met Count Camillus Cavour about the time that he founded his Sodality of St. Aloysius. When the Count became a member of the Cabinet in 1850, their relations became even more frequent than before. Don Bosco referring to this, says :

"Count Camillus regarded me as a friend. He often advised me to have the Oratory recognised by the State, and even promised me a million francs for the extension of my work. I however would not agree because of the change of sentiments to which men and governments are liable.

"Later on he told me to remember that there was always a place for me at his table, where we could talk freely. One day I went to his office at the Government on some important business, but he refused to see me and told the attendant to take me into a room at the side. When he came in, he said he must insist on my staying to have lunch with him, and promised to grant everything I wanted. And he kept his word."

The path taken by the Count was naturally very different to Don Bosco's, particularly in regard to ecclesiastical questions; but they remained excellent friends and though their greatness was opposite in character, they had several points in common. They were both untiring workers, both persevering and unshaken in obtaining their ends, both of genial disposition, witty and frank in dealing with others; despising display, but insisting when necessary on minute points; both possessing great practical wisdom. Their relations ceased in 1855, when the Cavour Cabinet passed a law for the suppression of many religious orders. They met once more however, in 1860, when Cavour did Don Bosco an unfriendly turn, but afterwards remedied it. In the spring, a police examination of the Oratory had been carried out, and it was conducted in a very hostile spirit. Not content with that, a further order was made out by Farini, the Minister of the Interior. It said: "By

order of the Government a diligent search shall be made in the establishment of the priest Don Bosco, and every part thereof shall be investigated. He is suspected of having compromising relations with the Jesuits, with Archbishop Fransoni, and with the Papal Court. If any evidence of such is found he shall be at once arrested."

Was it possible that Cavour, the president of the Council, could be ignorant of this order or that he thought any reason existed for it? It must be remembered that the anti-clerical party was constantly clamouring against the Oratory, and as Farini had been finally induced to give way, Cavour may have done the same in one of his unfortunate moments of opportunism. He is reported to have said:

"I am of opinion that this search is useless, for he is far more clever than any of us; he is either perfectly innocent, or if not he has taken due precautions; however do as you think best."

Don Bosco had to submit to four hours of searching, questioning and humiliation; not content with protesting in writing he went to the Secretary of the Home Department and asked for an interview with the Minister. The Secretary was inclined to be insulting in the presence of several persons waiting there, and hinted that he had better go. Don Bosco then spoke to him in a whisper, and whatever it was, it made the Secretary change his whole demeanour, for he obtained an appointment for the following morning.

The interview with Farini on the next day was rather stormy. The minister even threatened to have Don Bosco arrested, but suddenly the door opened and Count Cavour entered. In a pleasant manner he asked: "What is the matter? You must have some regard for Don Bosco and arrange the matter amicably. I have always wished him well and I do so still. What is the difference about?" and he signed him to sit down.

Don Bosco was again at his ease. He remembered the Count's former friendship and his good sense. He therefore replied :

"The House at Valdocco, which you have so often visited, praised and assisted — they now wish to destroy it. They want me to disperse the poor boys who are living there, and are being brought up in the manner you have so often approved. The priest whom you have so often praised they are regarding as the leader of rebels. Without any reason I have been molested and dishonoured, and the Institute which lives only by the support of the well-disposed and which depends upon its good name, is disgraced. Worse still : morality, religion and the sacraments were made the subject of derision by the agents of the Government in my own house, and in the presence of the boys. Is it possible that you agreed to all this? "

"No, no — reassure yourself," said Cavour, "and be persuaded that no one wishes to harm you. We two have always been friends and I hope we shall remain so. Let me speak freely ; you have been deceived ; abusing your good nature, some friends must have led you to take political action which has had unfortunate consequences. "

"Politics!" replied Don Bosco, "the Catholic priest has no other politics than those of the Gospel, and fears no consequences. So true is this, that I challenge them to find one sole proof of the accusations made against me and my Institute. "

"It is not so much proofs, but the spirit," answered Cavour. For some time past the spirit of the Institute and its Director has been incompatible with the political views of the Government. This is how I reason : You are for the Pope, the Government is against him ; therefore you are against the Government. There can be no escape from that. "

Don Bosco saw that Cavour was trying to get out of the difficulty, so he replied :

"I shall not attempt to escape from it. Even though I am for the Pope, and the Government is against him, it does not follow that I am against the Government, but that the Government is against me. But let us leave that apart. I am for the Pope and certainly I shall remain so till death, but that does not prevent me from being a good citizen, for politics have nothing to do with me and I do not meddle with them, or do anything against the Government. I have lived twenty years in Turin. I have written, spoken and worked in public. Where is there a line, or a word or a deed that the Government find censurable..."

The two ministers had little in answer to this, but Cavour fell back upon his good humour and habit of jesting, and said: "You surely believe in the Bible, Don Bosco, and there we read that who is with Christ cannot be with the world; now, if you are with the Pope and so with Christ, you cannot be with the Government. It is clear — either with God or with the devil."

"Exactly," replied Don Bosco, "and so the Government is not only against the Pope, but against the Gospel and against Christ Himself. You didn't mean to admit that. But however that may be, the Gospel solves the difficulty when it says: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Hence the subject of any State can be a good Catholic, can be with Christ and the Pope, and do good etc., and at the same time be with Caesar, that is, observe the laws of the Government except — and he emphasised these words — when it is a question of obeying the persecutors of Religion, and the despots who would destroy one's conscience and liberty."

After some other argument Don Bosco was assured that he might remain tranquil. "But," said Farini, "Be prudent, Signor Abate, we live in troublous times, and to some people a gnat may appear a camel."

"Very well" said Don Bosco. "Let us make an arrangement

hat whenever you have any advice or observation regarding the Oratory, you will send me word."

This was agreed upon. The ministers shook hands with him and as he left Cavour said: "Now our course is clear and we shall be friends ever in the future — and do not forget to pray for me." Don Bosco replied:

"I will pray that God may assist you both in life and in death." They did not see each other again. No one would have thought that there would so soon be occasion for Don Bosco to remember his promise. Cavour died on June 6th 1861. Don Bosco spoke of him to the boys after night prayers, and in a manner worthy of both the speaker and his subject. He recommended him very earnestly to the prayers of all.

We have seen what friendly relations existed between Don Bosco and the minister Rattazzi. When the first search above referred to took place, Rattazzi was only a Member of Parliament. He was indignant when he heard of it, and having had a full account of it from Don Bosco himself, he offered to bring the matter up in Parliament, and spoke very strongly against it.

Don Bosco thanked him, but preferred to have direct recourse to Farini and to the Minister of Education. He may have thought that the strained relations then existing between Cavour and Rattazzi might injure his cause.

One day Rattazzi asked Don Bosco if he had incurred the censures of the Church by taking part in the legislation against it. Don Bosco said he would take time to reflect upon the matter. When he went back, Rattazzi met him with the question: "Well, am I excommunicated?"

Don Bosco in serious tones replied that he would much like to say that he was not, but that he could not find a single text-book of theology which would allow him to say so. Rattazzi thanked

him, and complained that none of those he had previously consulted had had the courage to tell him the truth. He concluded by saying he would always be prepared to do anything for the Oratory.

Don Bosco came into contact with other ministers, for in 1866 there was a movement to make him close his schools since his teachers had no diplomas. Several clerics were attending the University in order to obtain them, and this secured a temporary recognition. A later minister, however, declared that this was illegal and Don Bosco went to see him. There was some trouble at first, but he was finally left in peace. Don Bosco afterwards sent all his prospective teachers to be regularly entered as University students and they were the first clerics to adopt this procedure after the change of governments.

What a pleasure it would have been to him could he have lived to see in 1909 one of his priests, Don Ubaldi, appointed to professorship in Greek in that very University! It would have appeared like a further very appropriate expansion of his work.

In spite of these difficulties with his scholastic matters, Don Bosco went on building his schools, and enlarged those of the Oratory. He said: "The Oratory was started under difficulties; under difficulties it has lived, and it will continue in spite of them."

Don Bosco had very friendly relations with the Keeper of the Seals, Signor Conforti, and with the minister of War, Signor Pettiti. At Florence he happened to meet the Minister of Finance, and having explained to him his pecuniary difficulties, asked him to try and release him from certain taxes. The Minister did so — not directly — but by having Don Bosco reimbursed from the Public funds.

The Minister of Public Works always received Don Bosco most courteously; he sent him a permit for the free carriage of the building material for his church, and gave him a thousand francs out of his own pocket.

Towards the end of 1866, Don Bosco was again at Florence, and he received a request quite unexpectedly to go to the President of the Council, the Barone Ricasoli. He went, and was ushered to the presence not only of the minister, but of the whole Ministry. He says :

"I didn't know what was going on, but it appeared to me to be a full gathering of the ministers, and they seemed to be waiting for me to come. Some of them knew me already, but I had never had any business with Ricasoli. After a few words of greeting, the latter said :

"You are aware that the Government sent a special embassy to treat with the Holy Father about the appointment of Bishops to the vacant Sees of Italy. We have charged Signor Tonello to secure the agreement, but there is some fear as to his success. We know that you are about to go to Rome, and we would ask you to act in concert with our envoy to secure the happy issue of this affair."

"But do you know that you are dealing with poor Don Bosco and that?..."

"Oh yes, we are quite aware of all that — and we know, moreover, that you are more Catholic than the Pope himself."

"I am quite satisfied," I said with a smile, "to be as Catholic as the Pope."

"And so when you get to Rome, interview Signor Tonello, and smooth away all the difficulties that may arise. If you agree to accept our proposal we shall immediately advise Signor Tonello to await your arrival, so that you may arrange this important business together."

"But do you think that Don Bosco is a suitable person for so important an undertaking?"

"The whole ministry is sure of it. To smooth away certain difficulties we need someone in your position, since you are a

*persona grata* with the Holy Father, and you can assure him His Majesty earnestly desires to comply at all costs with subjects' wishes in this matter."

"In that case I certainly cannot refuse. I should only be too happy to be able to render this service to the Church, whose behalf a priest should be ready to undertake anything."

It was arranged that he should be in Rome in the beginning of 1867.

When King Victor Emmanuel heard that Don Bosco had accepted the task, he sent for him to come to see him, but Don Bosco had already left Florence. Soon after, the King sent to the Oratory two wild goats that he had killed when out shooting. The Prefect of Turin brought them with a little note saying: "From a grateful King to Don Bosco's little boys." However, in spite of arrangements the two never met. Although the King showed displeasure, when Don Bosco wrote to him reproving him for laws against Religious Orders, he always maintained his good-will towards him. He often sent him money, and he allowed Prince Amedeo to take part in the festivities for the opening of the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians in 1867. Speaking of him in the presence of several persons in Genoa, the King said:

"Indeed, Monsignor, Don Bosco is truly a saint." The meeting seemed destined never to take place. The King's adjutant General d'Angrogna, rode up to the Oratory one morning, without another rider. Don Bosco was out. It was not known till afterwards that the second rider was the King.

When Don Bosco went to Rome in 1867, he had a long interview with Signor Tonello at the Albergo di Spagna, and then went to see the Secretary of State, Cardinal Antonelli, in order to assure him of the sincerity of the Government's desire to come to a settlement, about this very vexed and grave question of the appointment of the Bishops. The Cardinal shewed he had apprecia-

he spirit in which the embassy was made. He gave Don Bosco considerable sum for his boys, and asked for his blessing.

Don Bosco then had a long audience with Pius IX. As we have already pointed out, the personal relations between the Pope and Don Bosco had begun in 1858, when he had asked the Holy Father to consider the constitutions of the Salesian Society. On this occasion it seemed that Pius IX. wished to put his talents and his virtue to the test. The many persons he consulted about him; the visits he desired Don Bosco to make to Institutes of Education in Rome; the spiritual exercises he asked him to give to the prisoners; his offer to make him a Monsignor — an offer which Don Bosco jokingly, but firmly, declined — all this seemed to be a sort of experiment. The result may be seen in some singular concessions he then made to him, such as the faculty of hearing confessions in any diocese whatsoever, and of being dispensed from saying the breviary, a dispensation of which he did not avail himself, except when from morning till night he was absolutely occupied in grave affairs, and near the end of his life, when his health and sight were failing. It was seen also in his opinion of him, expressed to the Countess of Romelly, when he called Don Bosco "the treasure of Italy;" and again when he sent to ask his advice on some important matters, and in offering him repeatedly, but in vain, dignities at Rome, so that he might have him near by.

One Sunday, in June 1863, the Marquis Scarampi, went to the Oratory, as he was accustomed to do, to help Don Bosco with the catechism. Afterwards he told him that when he left Rome a few days before, the Pope told him to ask Don Bosco how it was he had not written to him for some time. The Marquis was soon returning to Rome, so Don Bosco gave him a letter which was duly handed to the Pope.

When the Marquis came back, he asked Don Bosco if he

would be indiscreet in asking what he had written to the Pope for when Pius IX. read it, he seemed much surprised; he read it, and re-read it, and then said:

"What on earth has Don Bosco got in his mind to write this to me? I did not expect a letter of this kind."

Don Bosco replied:

"I will tell you briefly: I told the Pope not to place too much security in these outward signs of peace, but to prepare himself to make the sacrifice of Rome, for it will be taken from him."

In the matter above-mentioned about the appointment to the vacant sees, Don Bosco had been successful in bringing about an agreement. Later on, in 1871, after the annexation of Rome he was again charged with a similar task on the part of the Government. He succeeded in settling several differences, and would have achieved much more, had not the liberal press made a hubbub about his journeys between the Government and Rome. The great usefulness of his mission is recognised in a letter from the Keeper of the Seals, still preserved in the Archives of the Salesian Society.

In the meantime, Pius IX. wished to have his advice on the very anxious question as to the opportuneness of his leaving Rome or not. Don Bosco replied: "The Guardian of Israel should remain at his post and keep watch over the citadel of God."

In 1874, when he was again in Rome, he prevailed upon the Minister of Justice to forbid a public ball which it was proposed to hold in the Coliseum — the soil of which was consecrated by the blood of the martyrs; and in the midst of many other difficulties he helped to secure exemption from suppression for the Oblate of Tor de' Specchi, for the Nuns of the Sacred Heart at the Trinità and for the Sisters of Charity at Bocca della Verità.

It will now be necessary to retrace our steps a little. Do:

Francesia, who accompanied Don Bosco to Rome in 1867, has kept a record of an important meeting between the King of Naples, Francis II, and the Founder of the Salesian Society. The King had at that time retired to Rome, and was staying at the Palazzo Farnese, which belonged to him.

One morning Don Bosco had said Mass in the private chapel of the palace. When Don Francesca went to meet him, he saw him with the King, who was accompanying him back, and saw also Queen Maria Sofia. The lady appeared to be in no pleasant mood, so much so, that when they were alone, Don Francesca asked Don Bosco what had happened. He replied :

"When my Mass and thanksgiving were over, the King himself came up and took me aside into a room where the Queen was waiting. After a cup of coffee, and when the attendant had gone, the King said :

"Don Bosco, we have lost a kingdom, or rather two kingdoms, shall we be able to regain them?"

"I was certainly not expecting such a question as that, so I hesitated a moment. Then I looked at him with a smile, and seeing that he meant me to give him an answer, I said quite tranquilly :

"Your Majesty, let us devote our attention to acquiring the Kingdom of God!" The King replied :

"And give up all idea, then, of a kingdom in this world? You ought to see how much my subjects desire my return."

"Still, God has otherwise disposed. Your Majesty can justly say what the Prophet Jeremiah said in his time: "Our fathers have transgressed..... and we have borne their iniquities." One cannot forget the troubles brought upon the Church in Naples through the action of your ancestors. They are deeds which pass from generation to generation, and God requires them to be fully atoned for."

"But then, what about the good they have done, and that I myself might have been able to do?"

"That is true, your Majesty, but it is not so great as bearing with Christian fortitude the burden that comes from your forefathers."

"And so to what conclusion do you come?"

"That your Majesty will not return to Naples."

The King took all this in very good part, and at the end he looked down and said: "I hoped to hear of a different future, but I accept it without complaint, and with the desire of repairing the great wrongs committed against the Church by my family."

The words of Don Bosco must have made a deep impression upon the King, for in 1893 when he met the Abbe de Villeneuve in Paris he said: "My House has done great injury to the Church, and it is natural that I should wish to expiate it."

Don Bosco continued:

"But the Queen did not seem prepared to submit to this hard fate. She said that after their departure from Naples, things had gone even worse, that now their prospects were brighter, and that perhaps God would be appeased, contrary to all human appearances."

"I now saw that the conversation was becoming more serious, and that we might step on thorny ground, so I sought to change the subject somewhat. However, a servant came in to say that Don Bosco was awaited, and another announced the arrival of his Secretary. We stood up, and the King, having asked for my blessing, accompanied me to the door. The queen remained behind..... she was somewhat disconcerted."

A few days later the Queen Mother asked to see Don Bosco, so he went one evening alone; Don Francesca was to go later on to meet him. After the interview, when asked how Her Majesty was, he said:

"She was quite well; she asked me for a medal of Our Lady Help of Christians, and desired me to see her children: she spoke about the work we are doing in Turin, and the new Church, and said she would do what lay in her power to assist me. She then said: 'If we were back in Naples, I could do a great deal more. Do you think we shall ever return?'" I replied:

"Your Majesty, I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but if you ask for my opinion, I would say that your Majesty will not see Naples again."

"She looked at me steadily, and then said: 'I am resigned to the will of God.'"

Don Francesia then asked: "And did you have the courage to prophesy such a misfortune in that straightforward manner?"

"And how would you have had me say it? She required a direct answer and I gave it. I know that it was a hard thing to say, but you will see that it is true."

And so it was. In that same year, cholera broke out in Rome, and the Queen hastened away to Albano to escape it. But that place became one of its worst centres, and the Queen was among its first victims.

In the beginning of 1883, Don Bosco went to Paris, where he was received with universal and enthusiastic reverence. Visitors of every class of society and of all political parties went to see him. An old gentleman stayed in the waiting-room three hours one evening. When he went in, he declared that he was an unbeliever, and when Don Bosco spoke of eternity and of the salvation of his soul, he replied as though he had no anxiety at all on that point, and as though he had quite forgotten that he must die.

However, after they had talked for some time, he bent down his head as though meditating on some course of action. Don

Bosco maintained silence, and after a while he recommended him to bear in mind that he could not have much longer to live, and that this would be the best time to return to the Church, and to implore pardon. The old man replied that no matter how widely their opinions differed, Don Bosco had spoken like a real friend, and he would reflect on what he had said. He took his leave, promising to come back again. On the visiting card that he left, Don Bosco read: "Victor Hugo." He kept his promise, but on his second visit he took Don Bosco's hand and said:

"I must ask you to pardon me or the trick I played on you last time, in introducing myself as an unbeliever. I believe in the immortality of the soul, as I believe in God, and I hope to die a Catholic, with a priest who will recommend my soul to its Creator."

Don Bosco wrote out an account of the interview himself, so that it might be faithfully recorded.

Before that year was out, Don Bosco was called to see another distinguished person — the Comte de Chambord, grandson of the King of France. The fame of the extraordinary favours obtained by the prayers of Don Bosco, induced the Countess, Maria Teresa d'Este, and the household to send for him. They asked him several times, but he hesitated to go. Don Francesca says:

"We were surprised at his refusal, for he usually went so willingly to give any spiritual comfort, and we urged that even the rich and great had need of a visit. He replied that there were many priests and even Bishops whom the Prince could have. But at last, a gentleman-in-waiting came to Turin to take Don Bosco back with him to the castle of Frohsdorf. He still hesitated, but at last consented to go. It is interesting to compare the accounts of Don Francesca and of M. Du Bourg, the gentleman-in-waiting, who describes this event in his "Entrevues de Frohsdorf." In the one we are told of Don Bosco's respect for the

position, virtue and noble character of the prince, who did not seem able to understand that God might be capable of securing peace and prosperity to France without him. The other gives us the exact view of the French Legitimists, who rested their religious and political hopes absolutely on the life of Henry V. They desired Don Bosco to work a miracle off-hand, and they thought he had done so on July 15th, the Eve of the Feast of St. Henry, when the prince was brought into the dining-room in an easy chair, after he had not been able to get out of bed for a long time. But Don Bosco said :

“ We shall pray to Our Lady, Help of Christians, to grant you the favour ; but if your Majesty obtains something more precious than a temporal one, we ought to be even better pleased. ”

The favour he referred to was that of a happy death, which indeed came a few weeks later.

When Don Bosco returned, and these visits were referred to, he said with a smile : “ Certainly God has been pleased to exalt the shepherd-lad of Becchi, and we should be grateful. However, I need not hide from you the fact, that I always go far more readily to the deathbed of a poor person than to those of Kings. ”

Under all circumstances, and with all classes of persons, he regulated his conduct by these words of his own.

“ A priest is always a priest, and should always shew himself to be such in everything he says. To be a priest means to have always in view as an obligation the great interests of God. Therefore he should not allow people to go away from him, without having shewn by his words that his desire is for their eternal salvation. ”

## CHAPTER XXII.

### HIS LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

TOWARDS the end of 1887, a priest came to visit Don Bosco who had not seen him for the long space of forty years. During the conversation the visitor recalled Don Bosco's illness of the year 1846, and asked him if he remembered what he had said on his recovery at that time. Don Bosco replied that he had a distinct recollection of it, and that he was well prepared to die then, but now he was not so certain.

"But," said the other, see what a great amount of good you have been able to accomplish — oratories, churches, colleges, schools, homes and missions — and religious orders to administer them. If you had died in 1846, where would all these have been?"

"You are mistaken in that," replied Don Bosco, "all these things would have been done just the same. God Himself is their Author, they are the work of His Hands." Then he bowed down his head and seemed much moved as he replied: "They are all the works of God."

One day Don Lemoyne wished him good health so that he might accomplish still more. To this he replied:

"God may dispose of me as He wills; as long as He leaves me in this life, I willingly remain, and work in a hurry, for I see that the time is getting short. When the bell sounds to call me into eternity I shall go even more willingly, but as long as I live I shall not cease to make projects and realise them as far as possible. What I leave undone will be completed by those that remain. The important point is for me to make sure that God will say: *Euge serve bone et fidelis*; Well done thou good and faithful servant!"

That was the view that he always took of life. His one desire was to turn it to profit by working as though his labour was quite indispensable; yet never regarding his past work as meritorious, or supposing that he was in the least necessary to its continuance. The only value that he set upon his labours was that he might correspond through them with the commands of God, and thus to prepare himself to die well.

But no matter what views he held in this regard, his labours and the accompanying anxieties reduced Don Bosco almost to prostration, long before age would have been able to affect his robust constitution. The writer of these lines remembers having once assisted him, by supporting him with his arm to go up a flight of stairs. It was in 1884 (four years before his death), during the celebrations at the College at Valsalice, in honour of the episcopal consecration of Mgr. Cagliero. Even then Don Bosco found it difficult and painful to do any walking, yet he could manage to do a little, up to the last few months of 1887. On December 18th of that year, he gave up walking entirely and had to be wheeled about in a chair. But this could only be used for a few days; before Christmas came, he had taken to bed and never left it. His weakness increased so rapidly that he received the last Sacraments on December 24th. Then he rallied somewhat and this brought new hopes to the immense number who were anxiously following the course of the illness. The medical men would not sanction these hopes, but Don Bosco's sons naturally held fast to their illusions. He himself was under no mistaken impression. On December 28th Don Albera said to him: "It is the third time that you have approached the threshold of eternity, and you have come back through the prayers of your followers. I feel certain that the same will happen again." But Don Bosco replied: "No! this time I shall not come back to you."

Moreover when those around him begged him to ask for his

cure he would only say: "May the will of God be done." If anyone suggested an ejaculation to him with the same end in view, he would not respond to it. Nor had he any intention of being consoled by the comfort given by the doctors: "I have no fear, I am tranquil and disposed to die."

His last few days were like a *résumé* of his whole life. He was dying of exhaustion rather than of any particular malady, and his mind kept all its vigorous activities to the end. No day passed on which he did not recommend to his followers some special point of the rule or of the way of perfection. He was continually visited by His Eminence, Cardinal Alimonda, and by persons of high rank who were coming to Turin, and who brought him messages of anxious enquiry from His Holiness and from all parts of the world. He received them with the humble familiarity which had always characterised his dealings with others. Mindful of the constant demands for succour that his works involved, and on the other hand, of the daily proofs of the assistance of Providence, he remained calm and confident, assuring himself in his humility that God had no need of his co-operation. On January 8th he said to his secretary: "I am sorry that I can no longer assist you by going out to ask for alms as I used to: I have spent all the money I had, before my illness came on, and now we are without means and the boys must be provided for. You must let our friends know that whoever wishes to do a kindness to Don Bosco must do it without any delay, for he can no longer either come or go."

His good humour remained to the end. His attendants were one day discussing how to change him from one bed to another without inconveniencing him more than they could help. Don Bosco said: "Just get a rope and put it round me and hoist me into the other bed by it." On January 15th when his breathing came very painfully he said to the attendant: "If you could find a bellows-

maker who would fit me up, I should be much better." Two evenings later when it was necessary to lift him, and Don Francesca was helping, he said with a smile: "There was no need to disturb such a celebrity to assist me." The moving caused a good deal of pain and Don Sala remarked: "Poor Don Bosco! How much I am hurting you." "No," he replied: "But rather poor Don Sala, who has to undertake such a task; but never mind, in good time I will repay you for your kindness."

On Jan. 27th Don Sala was alone with him in his room and they talked a little about the work that had been done. Don Bosco said: "Whatever has been done is due to the grace of God: I might have been able to do more..... but my sons will do it ....." After a few more difficult breathings he added: "..... Our Congregation is led by God and protected by our Lady Help of Christians."

At 8 o'clock he could hardly be understood and it was doubtful whether he was conscious, but a remark to the bystanders just afterwards proved that he was.

The only signs of life he displayed in his last hours were his continual prayers. During nearly the whole of Jan. 29th he was heard to say: Mother!... tomorrow... and then in a whisper, Jesus... Mary... I give you my heart and my soul..... *in manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*. "Into thy hands. O Lord, I commend my spirit." Mother... open to me the gates of Heaven... Later still he joined his hands and repeated several texts of Scripture, which had been his guiding maxims: — Love your enemies — Do good to those who persecute you — Seek the Kingdom of God... — He had been a man of action, but one who had never for a moment allowed work to displace prayer; who had prayed as he worked, but who while at prayer had always considered himself free to turn to labour, with the spirit of prayer.

On January 30th Don Rua anticipated the office of Rector Major

which was so soon to devolve upon him, by announcing to all that their Rector Major was still Don Bosco, and that he would always remain so in spirit. The whole of the Community and boys that passed through the room where Don Bosco lay unconscious. His eyes were closed, and his face bore a calm, pleasant expression, although this little ceremony took a long time, all were able to have a farewell glance at him, whom they had regarded with the greatest affection and reverence.

At a quarter to five on Jan. 31st, 1888, the priest who stood at the pillow, turned to those around and began the *De profundis*. His soul had passed to God. When the prayer was finished, Don Rua said to his confrères with deep emotion : " We are left orphans but we can console ourselves with the knowledge that if we have lost a father on earth, we have gained a protector in heaven. Let us show ourselves worthy of him by following his teaching and example." With these words of grief mingled with hope the succession to Don Bosco was begun.

On March 25th, 1855, Don Rua had made his profession and thus become the first member of the Society. Who would then have thought that he would succeed to so vast an inheritance with houses already established in the new world. He received it in the state in which Don Bosco had always maintained it : in poverty ; the great House in which Don Bosco died knew not where to turn for its daily sustenance.

Much less indeed would anyone have imagined what abundant fulfilment was to follow Don Bosco's words : that his sons would do what he had left undone. Twenty-two years later, when Don Rua passed away in his turn, the number of his Houses had risen to three hundred and forty one. They had spread in succession to Belgium, Algeria, Palestine, Mexico, Portugal, Venezuela, Peru, Austria, Tunis, Bolivia, Egypt, Canada, Colony, Paraguay, the United States, San Salvador, the Antilles

turkey, India, China, Mozambique, Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama. The missionaries in Patagonia had definitely won over those immense Territories to civilisation and religion, and they had entered upon the same task with regard to the *Jivaros* of Mendez and Gualaquiza, and the *Bororos* of Matto Grosso in central Brazil. These extraordinary results were a source of wonder to those, who smiled disdainfully over the lowly beginnings of the Salesian Society, and a thorough refutation to others who so loudly proclaimed that the era of the Religious Orders had passed away for ever.

But these feelings and ideas were all temporarily suppressed in the presence of the remains of Don Bosco, and all criticism and cavil were lost in the expression of united regard. His funeral, which was like that of a king, showed that his loss was a source of sorrow to men of all shades of opinion. So true it is that the spirit of those who proclaim the inability of the Church to affect the world at large, and who spend their efforts in the endeavour to secure that result, is like the anger of those children who, while in the act of opposing and offending their parents, have ever in the back-ground the hope of obtaining forgiveness. Whenever a man of extraordinary gifts appears, raising up on behalf of the people the beneficial works of God, these men of wrath, who have declared such things to be impossible and have protested against them, become somehow content to regard them in their completion, and admire the one who has deluded them. They would indeed have cause to repent, if, to the great detriment of humanity, they ever succeeded in shortening the hand of God.

Some have sought to excuse the veneration paid to Don Bosco by declaring it due to him for being a modern saint, as though there could be any antagonism between heroic virtue in modern as opposed to former times. But if this book has proved anything, it is the ready, spontaneous and careful adherence of Don

Bosco to whatever the constant and certain traditions of the past suggested, both in doctrine and morality; it is, that only by such fidelity could he evolve new remedies from Christianity to meet the modern needs.

The spirit in which he devoted himself to the young was drawn straight from the gospel, and piety he made the master-key of education. It is true that his missionary expeditions included a knowledge of that modern aids could supply, but the spirit that inspired them was the apostolic spirit of the Popes, and of the great founders of religious orders, who were not satisfied with the evangelising of those at home, but must extend it beyond their borders; who could not rest satisfied while they saw the banquet of the faithful restricted to certain peoples, but desired to satiate the hunger and thirst of those who were far away, and were even ignorant that there was such a banquet served at all.

In the formation of the Salesian Society he naturally kept in view the altered conditions of the times and the laws at present in force; this accounts to some extent, for the simplicity and adaptability of its outward form, or architecture; but the fundamental virtues on which it is based are those of all time; poverty, chastity and obedience have been conspicuous throughout the preceding pages. His acceptance from dreams or visions of the indications as to what action he ought to take, may be the subject of examination, in regard to his communications with Heaven; but it is also a clear and decisive proof of his willingness to disregard his personal views in all his enterprises, and to be but the obedient executor of the divine commands.

Those who have styled Don Bosco the St. Vincent de Paul of the XIX. century, thereby confess that their definition requires the elements of tradition as well as of modernness. But comparisons are often declared to be invidious, and this applies somewhat to men of God. There was too great a diversity of character

and period between these two; St. Vincent was for many years a guardian and tutor in the houses of the nobility; Don Bosco was taken from the life of the fields and country, and was ever characterised by it; the former was born in a period and in a nation in which frequent intercourse between the poor and the rich had to be created; the latter flourished in an age and place where the spirit of charity and of true philanthropy was already at work, and only needed guiding into proper channels, and to be made to expand and develop. St. Vincent left a name for gentle sweetness, Don Bosco for rapid organisation; and the latter, even regarded apart from his work, had too many unsuspected and remarkable gifts, while the vocation and sphere of each differed too widely, for any comparison to be satisfactorily made between them.

Let it suffice to draw as a conclusion from the life of both, that heroic virtues must have their roots deep down in the ancient soil of Christian examples and traditions. This identity of ground, however, will give to each plant a wide-spreading liberty for its branches and fruit, whose very difference will be the signs of abundant fertility. Even in this variety there will be again realised that *God is wonderful in His saints*.

With these personal characteristics, developed by the use of means as old as the gospel, Don Bosco will enter — if it is the Will of God, and subject to the authority of the church — among the number of the Saints.

He was not yet laid in his tomb when wonders began to go out from him. The very morning of his death, the superior of a convent, ignorant of the event, had written to her mother asking her to get Don Bosco's blessing for her, as she had long suffered from a painful illness. Shortly afterwards she fell asleep. She awoke, got up out of bed and was better. While she was

in the act of relating the circumstances to her wondering community, a newspaper-boy was heard calling out his paper and adding : " Death of Don Bosco ! "

A parish-priest had long before consulted Don Bosco about the conversion of a prominent unbeliever, and had been told to pray and continue to hope. One morning the priest seemed to see Don Bosco, who approached and told him that the favour was obtained. In fact the man in question was converted. The priest took note of the day of the vision. It was Jan. 31st, when, unknown to the priest, Don Bosco had just passed away. An abundance of facts such as these, the general confidence in the efficacy of his intercession, the examination and minute scrutiny of what he had done and said induced the Sacred Congregation of Rites, with the solemn approval of His Holiness Pius X., to introduce the cause for his beatification. From that day Don Bosco has been saluted with the title of *Venerable*.

While awaiting the day of his final triumph, we can point to him as the complete condemnation of those, who declare that the Church must reform herself if she would gain her early efficacy; we can cite him as the most recent and ample proof of her fecundity amid her immutability. What else should be the criterion of the efficacy of a Faith, if not the power to raise up men wholly conformable to its teaching, and to make them capable in turn of raising up to it numerous followers, of directing themselves and others in the paths of good works, and to impress with their own fervour the thoughts, the affections, the lives of others? Don Bosco's motto : *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle*, — Give me souls, all the rest may go — is a résumé of the Christian aspirations of all centuries; but it is also a courageous proposal to win innumerable conquests through innumerable sacrifices.

Visto: Nulla osta alla stampa.

*Torino 9 ottobre 1917*

Don. L. PISCETTA

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Nihil obstat

*Torino, 8 dicembre 1917*

CAROLUS SALOTTI  
*S. R. Congr. Assessor.*

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IMPRIMATUR

C. FRANCESCO DUVINA  
*Provic. Gen.*











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